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THE
LIFE AND LAND OF BURNS,

BY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM,

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS

BY

THOMAS CAMPBELL, ESQ.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN ESSAY ON THE GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF BURNS,

BY

THOMAS CARLYLE, ESQ.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WHATEVER attaches to the memory of the "Bard of Scotland" cannot fail to excite, in all the lovers of song, intense and universal interest. The splendid productions of his muse, no longer the peculiar property of his own favored Land, have become a rich contribution to the whole "Republic of Letters," while they take rank among those of Homer, Shakspeare, and Schiller, with a host of others, whose names are treasured up as "household deities." In issuing the present Volume, the publishers feel assured that it will prove one of deep and permanent value, since it comprises a new Memoir of the Poet, by Allan Cunningham, one of the most competent of his biographers; a series of graphic historical Notices of the Localities rendered classic by his muse; together with some Original Letters, never before printed in America, completing the entire Series of his Epistolary Correspondence; and an analytical and critical Essay on his genius and writings, by Thomas Carlyle, which, for its critical acumen, fine discriminating taste and power, may be regarded as unsurpassed in the annals of literary criticism. As a supplemental volume to all editions of the writings of Burns hitherto published, this work must prove of intrinsic value, since it will not only be found necessary to their completion, but, being illustrative of his works, will also be of important service to the full appreciation of the author.

THE PUBLISHERS.



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CRITICAL ESSAY
ON THE
GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF BURNS,
BY THOMAS CARLYLE.

IN the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, "ask for bread and receive a stone;" for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognise. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected; and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame: the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers, and

here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world !*

Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologize for this new attempt on such a subject : but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him ; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted ; and will probably gain, rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet : and this is probably true ; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's ; for it is certain that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbor of John a Combe's, had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a *Life of Shakspeare* ! What dissertations should we not have had, — not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws ! and how the Poacher became a Player ; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities ! In like manner we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honorable Excise Commissioners, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr writers, and the New and Old Light Clergy, whom he had to do

* *Life of Robert Burns*, by J. G. Lockhart.

with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say, but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

His former biographers have done something, no doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more, perhaps, than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronizing, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar, and gentleman, should do such honor to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues, and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait, but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay, it is not so much as this: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be ; and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book, accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography, though, being written on the very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany*, it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power, and contains rather more, and more multifarious quotations, than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant, and anxiously conciliating ; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small ; and, as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, " the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment." But there are better things than these in the volume, and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents—though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our

notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant, but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion, that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did co-existing circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavors and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in biography. Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read, and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those for whom they are intended.

Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own

time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamor proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well nigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain for ever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with the pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind,

if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments. Through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his eagle eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the irrepressible movement of his inward spirit, he struggles forward into the general view, and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labor, a gift which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this, that his darksome, drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask if it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapors, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendor, enlightening the world; but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colors into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of

this ; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy ; time and means were not lent him for this ; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene ; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, "amid the melancholy main," presented to the reflecting mind such a "spectacle of pity and fear," as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler, and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a race with whom the world could well dispense ; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathizing loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons, inspire us in general with any affection ; at best it may excite amazement ; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the "Eternal Melodies," is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation : we see in him a freer, purer, development of whatever is noblest in ourselves ; his life is a rich lesson to us, and we mourn his death, as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature in her bounty bestowed on us in Robert Burns ; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment, and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of

wisely guiding his own was not given. Destiny,—for so in our ignorance we must speak,—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared, could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom, and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of in-born riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The “Daisy” falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that “wee, cowering, timorous beastie,” cast forth, after all its provident pains, to “thole the sleety dribble, and cranreuch cauld.” The “hoar visage” of Winter delights him: he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for “it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind.*” A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending, fellow-feeling, what trustful, boundless love, what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him. Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart:

and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence, not for offence, no cold, suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The peasant Poet bears himself, we may say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the "insolence of condescension" cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms; and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was "quick to learn;" a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his Heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; "a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody." And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarrelling with

smugglers and vintners, computing excise dues upon tallow, and guaging ale barrels! In such toils was that mighty Spirit sorrowfully wasted : and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him ; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete ; that wanted all things for completeness : culture, leisure, true effort, nay, even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions, poured forth with little premeditation, expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humor of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have ; for, after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read ; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively ; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard ; unlettered, and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken,

are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognised: his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling; the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes he has lived and labored amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it, too, with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle;" but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition, of his own heart, and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are

earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank, or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the discovery is easy enough : but the practical appliance is not easy ; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false ; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both, of these deficiencies, combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life ! Great poets themselves are not always free of this vice ; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success, and he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man : yet if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men, we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men ? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more

or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion ; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature ? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt, and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humors, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last three score and ten years. To our minds, there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, and affected, in every one of these otherwise powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work, he ever wrote ; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was ; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice ; we believe, heartily detested it : nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the simplest of all : to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful ! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue ; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

It is necessary, however, to mention, that it is to the poetry of Burns that we now allude ; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special

reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavor to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style ; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted ; a certain, high-flown inflated tone ; the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakspeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast ! But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force, and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse ; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained ; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His Letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his poetry. In addition to its sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but

a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing. It displays itself in his choice of subjects, or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is for ever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness : home is not poetical but prosaic ; it is in some past, distant, conventional world, that poetry resides for him ; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-colored novels and iron-mailed epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-colored Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them ! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, “ a sermon on the duty of staying at home.” Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different ; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one ; and have as quaint a costume as the rest ; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness ? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed out of his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born ; or because he wrote of what passed in God’s world, and in the heart of man, which is the same after thirty

centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men, who have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favor, even from the highest.

The poet, we cannot but think, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavors; its unspeakable aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity: and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher? then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had, by his own strength, kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his

literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making ; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training ; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance " the elder dramatists," and so learned a poetic language ; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told, he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the higher classes ; because, above all other things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but an eye to see it with. Without eyes, indeed, the task might be hard. But happily every poet is born *in* the world, and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities, and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues, and all human vices ; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practised honest self-examination ? Truly, this same world may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's, or the Tuileries itself.

But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry ; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago ; inasmuch as poetry, soon after that date, vanished from the earth, and became no longer attainable by men ! Such cobweb speculations.

have, now and then, overhung the field of literature ; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there : the Shakspeare or the Burns, unconsciously, and merely as he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear ? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it ? It is not the material but the workman that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it ; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung ; but the *Wounded Hare* has not perished without its memorial ; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids ; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl ; neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent*, or Roman *Jubilee* ; but nevertheless, *Superstition*, and *Hypocrisy*, and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire, and genuine comic life. Let but the true poet be given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written : a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry ; it is redolent of natural life, and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him ; and yet a sweet native gracefulness : he is tender, and he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort ; he

melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see in him the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardor of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of a summer cloud. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit." And observe with what a prompt and eager force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward, metre, so clear, and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retsch is not more expressive or exact.

This clearness of sight we may call the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself perhaps a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary

powers. Homer surpasses all men in this quality : but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind ; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity ; their descriptions are detailed, ample, and lovingly exact ; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident ; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his ; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigor and laconic pith ? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward, he says, "*red-wat shod :*" giving, in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art !

In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigor of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, as in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise : " All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous ; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, is at all

times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in extreme sensibility, and a certain vague pervading tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts, that exist in the Poet, are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the poet speak to all men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: for it dwelt among the humblest objects, never saw philosophy, and never rose, except for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength, and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and "the

highest," it has been said, "cannot be expressed in words." We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, "wonders," in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the "doctrine of association." We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here for instance :

"We know nothing," thus writes he, "or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the *Æolian* harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave."

Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language probably require this; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character: neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the poetry of Burns, keen-

ness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling ; that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper ; with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is Love towards all Nature that inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that “ love furthurs knowledge : ” but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets ; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns’s fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe is lovely in his sight : “ the hoary hawthorn,” the “ troop of grey plover,” the “ solitary curlew,” all are dear to him ; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the “ ourie cattle ” and “ silly sheep,” and their sufferings in the pitiless storm !

“ I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O’ wintry war ;
Or thro’ the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o’ spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o’ thee ?
Where wilt thou cow’r thy chittering wing,
And close thy ee ? ”

The tenant of the mean hut, with its “ragged roof and chinky wall,” has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy: for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy!

“But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben;
O wad you tak a thought and men’!
Ye aiblins might — I dinna ken —
Still hae a stake;
I’m wae to think upo’ yon den,
Even for your sake!”

He did not know, probably, that Sterne had been beforehand with him. “He is the father of curses and lies,” said Dr. Slop; “and is cursed and damned already.” — “I am sorry for it,” quoth my uncle Toby! — “A poet without Love, were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.”

Why should we speak of *Scots, wha hae wi’ Wallace bled*; since all know it, from the king to the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet’s looks, forbore to speak,—judiciously enough,—for a man composing *Bruce’s Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode, the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

Another wild stormful song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Farewell*. Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that co-operates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy Northland Cacus, that "lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie," was not he too one of the Nimrods and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given him? A fibre of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart; for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody, his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy and despair, which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul sunk not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

" *Sae rantingly sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows tree.*"

Under a lighter and thinner disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognised as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humor. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all

Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humor: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on Poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces, there are traits of a Humor as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar, — the Humor of Burns.

Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's poetry, much more might be said; but now, with these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of his individual writings, adequately, and with any detail, would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems; they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter* itself, which enjoys so high a favor, does not appear to us, at all decisively, to come under this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new modelling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will for ever live, though silent, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we

say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living ; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere ; the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay, the idea of such a bridge is laughed at ; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, painted on ale-vapors, and the farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition ; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished ; but we find far more “ Shakspearian ” qualities, as these of *Tam o’ Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces ; nay, we incline to believe, that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his “ poems ” is one, which does not appear in Currie’s Edition ; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*. The subject truly is among the lowest in nature ; but it only the more shows our poet’s gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted ; melted together, refined ; and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, and soft of movement ; yet sharp and precise in its details ; every face is a portrait : that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*, are Scottish, yet ideal ; the scene is at once a dream, and the very Rag-castle of “ Poosy-Nansie.” Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a

real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem. The blanket of the night is drawn asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, and flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the action without effort; the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldiering; their "brats and callets" are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour of wassail and good cheer. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggar's Opera*, in the *Beggar's Bush*, as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigor, equals this *Cantata*; nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

But by far the most finished, complete, and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with the least obstruction; in its highest beauty, and pure sunny clearness. The reason may be, that Song is a brief and simple species of composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection, as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. The Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for, indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand,

aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we have songs enough "by persons of quality;" we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred, madrigals; many a rhymed "speech" in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop, rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from endeavoring to sing: though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul*; not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debateable land on the outside of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated. With the Songs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and, as it were, drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force and truth of sentiment, and inward meaning. The Songs of Burns

are not more perfect in the former quality, than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or slyest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear!" If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a peck o' Maut*, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven*; from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the songs of a people," said he, "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if ever any Poet might have equalled himself with Legislators, on this ground, it was Burns. His songs are already part of the mother tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all the ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in the joy and wo of existence, the name, the voice of that joy and that wo, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps, no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means, apparently the humblest.

In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable : we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling ; literature was, as it were, without any local environment ; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo* ; the thing written bears no mark of place ; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for men ; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalizations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception : not so Johnson ; the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas*. But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect ; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature : at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*. Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic : Theologic

ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country; however, it was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt, and a tolerably clumsy one, at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our "fervid genius," there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher: it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers, so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay, of any human affection whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope, there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may

be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy ; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable structure of social and moral Life, which Mind has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this : surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briers, but into roses, in the field of his life ! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities : the field of their life shows neither briers nor roses ; but only a flat, continuous thrashing floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the " Doctrine of Rent," to the " Natural History of Religion," are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality !

With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly passing away : our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries ; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathizing in all our attachments, humors, and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water, but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar ; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns : " a tide of Scottish prejudice," as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, " had been poured along his veins ; and he

felt that it would boil there till the floodgates shut in eternal rest." It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him ; that of Scottish song, and how eagerly he entered on it ; how devotedly he labored there ! In his most toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him ; it is the little happy-valley of his care-worn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it ! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end.

— " a wish, (I mind its power,)
 A wish, that to my latest hour
 Will strongly heave my breast ;
 That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
 Some useful plan or book could make,
 Or sing a sang at least.
 The rough bur Thistle spreading wide
 Among the bearded bear,
 I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
 And spared the symbol dear."

But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long, we cannot but think that the Life he willed, and was fated to lead among his fellow men, is both more interesting and instructive than any of his written works. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence ; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this too, alas, was but a fragment ! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched ; some columns, porticoes, firm masses of building, stand completed ; the rest more or

less clearly indicated ; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning ; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin ! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment ; much more is this the case in regard to his life, the sum and result of all his endeavors, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass ; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay, was mistaken, and altogether marred.

Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood ; but only youth : for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character ; in his thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself ; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men ; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes : glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to him ; he must dream and struggle about a certain “ Rock of Independence ;” which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still

but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more or less completely supplied with money, than others ; of his standing at a higher, or at a lower altitude in general estimation, than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed colors : he expects from it what it cannot give to any man ; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honor, pecuniary ease. He would be happy, not actively and in himself, but passively, and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labor, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot steady himself for any fixed or systematic pursuit, but, swerves to and fro, between passionate hope, and remorseful disappointment : rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier ; travels, nay, advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path ; and to the last, cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear, decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns : nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favor. This blessing is not given soonest to the best ; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it ; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develop it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without, as complex a condition from within : no "pre-established harmony" existed between the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns ; it was not wonderful, therefore, that the adjust-

ment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy, as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than Burns ; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated : yet in him too, we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood ; but at best, and only a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh ; but perhaps a still more important one, is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toil-worn ; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate : his father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest, character, as the best of our peasants are ; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and, what is far better and rarer, open-minded for more ; a man with a keen insight, and devout heart : reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made ; in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society ; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor ; had he been even a little richer, almost ever so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events turn on a straw ; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school ; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some

university; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole of the course of British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this! But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained a hard-worked plough-boy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene, there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, *Let us worship God*, are heard there from a “priest-like father;” if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a “little band of brethren.” Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport.

For a bold, warm, buoyant humor of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-colored splendor and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

———“in glory and in joy,
Behind his plough, upon the mountain side!”

We know, from the best evidence, that up to this date, Burns was happy ; nay, that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world ; more so even than he ever afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof ; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society ; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life ; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers ; we hope they are mistaken ; for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet, but to yield to them ; and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure ; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life ; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world ! that a man must be sufficient for himself ; and that “ for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing.” Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity ; begins, at all events, when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do ; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity ;

and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free. Surely such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite ! Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did—and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district ; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy, he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanaticism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself ; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurors than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts, at some period of his history ; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed : but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by "passions raging like demons" from within, he had little need of sceptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already

defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence ; his mind is at variance with itself ; the old divinity no longer presides there ; but wild Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world ; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant, as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men ; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guiltiness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by the red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder ; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost ; men and Fortune are leagued for his hurt ; “ hungry Ruin has him in the wind.” He sees no escape but the saddest of all : exile from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the “ gloomy night is gathering fast,” in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland :

“ Farewell, my friends, farewell, my foes !
My peace with these, my love with those :
The bursting tears my heart declare ;
Adieu, my native banks of Ayr !”

Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods ; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh : hastens thither with anticipating heart ; is welcomed as in triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation ; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest, or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honor, sympathy, affection. Burns’s appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh, must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature ; almost like the appearance of some

Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as "a mockery king," set there by favor, transiently, and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head: but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

"It needs no effort of imagination," says he, "to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been, in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail, at a single stride, manifested, in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had, ere long, no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."—p. 131.

The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us : details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker's personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative ; a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious.

"As for Burns," writes Sir Walter, "I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him : but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people ; and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word ; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember, which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side, — on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath :

' Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain:
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears.'

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded

me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

“ His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one’s knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth’s picture: but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i. e.* none of your modern agriculturists who keep laborers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

“ I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns’s acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

“ This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and

always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this. — I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since." — pp. 112-115.

The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favor; the calm, unaffected, manly manner, in which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigor and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him: but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay, had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear enough to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power

to choose the one, and reject the other ; but must halt for ever between two opinions, two objects ; making hampered advancement towards either. But so is it with many men : we “long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price ;” and so stand chaffering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the Night come, and our fair is over !

The Edinburgh learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart : with the exception of the good old Blacklock, whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great, also, he is treated in the customary fashion ; entertained at their tables, and dismissed : certain modica of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence ; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer ; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer ; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay poorer, for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of mere worldly Ambition ; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

What Burns was next to do or to avoid ; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might, at this point of time, have been a question for the wisest : and it was a question which he was left altogether to answer for himself : of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a

thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; and that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Some of his admirers, indeed, are scandalized at his ever resolving to *gauche*; and would have had him apparently lie still at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage should stir the waters, and then heal with one plunge all his worldly sorrows! We fear such counsellors knew but little of Burns; and did not consider that happiness might in all cases be cheaply had by waiting for the fulfilment of golden dreams, were it not that in the interim the dreamer must die of hunger. It reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in his scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest he "did not intend to borrow honor from any "profession." We think then that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man any thing.

Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a

man whose income had lately been seven pounds a-year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was his treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him : his mind is on the true road to peace with itself : what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds ; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see, and have at hand. Had the "patrons of genius," who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more !—the wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them, and Poetry would have shone through them as of old ; and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists,* all manner of fashionable dangles after

* There is one little sketch by certain "English gentlemen" of this class, which, though adopted in Currie's Narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary : "On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox-skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns." Now, we rather think, it was *not* Burns. For to say nothing of the fox-skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watch-coat with the belt, what are we to make of this "enormous Highland broad-sword" depending from him ? More especially, as there is no word of parish constables on the outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own midriff, or that of the public ! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and the

literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mæcæneses, hovered round him in his retreat ; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice ; and his warm social nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill ; they only meant themselves a little good ; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it ! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent ; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him ; their cruelty, which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighborhood, and Burns had no retreat but to the "Rock of Independence," which is but an air-castle, after all, that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately by contempt of others, and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it for ever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

Amid the vapors of unwise enjoyment, of bootless remorse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true loadstar, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay, with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where, without some such guide, there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics

least tendency, to seek for distinction, either in his own eyes, or those of others, by such poor mummeries.

rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel: and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy, when such offered, and of black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin, cast the first stone at him! For is he not a well-wisher of the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them. Nay, his convivial Mæcænases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breast-work of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierness, had actually seen dishonor in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut* him! We find one passage in this work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts:

"A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said: "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now;" and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

'His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he let'st wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing.

'O were we young, as we ance hae been,
We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-white lea!
And werena my heart light I wad die.'

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived."

Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps "where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart,"* and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down,—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns

* *Ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit.*—SWIFT'S Epitaph.

would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! "If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!" Some brief, pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how, too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labor itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt, too, that with all the "thoughtless follies" that had "laid him low," the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a-day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain? The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts for ever.

We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for

matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns ; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion ; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns : clear poetical activity ; madness ; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable ; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it : and yet Burns had an iron resolution ; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable ; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him : and he passed, not softly, yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load !

Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him ; that by counsel, true affection, and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in these

suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual, could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head, as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not really believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men in any rank of society could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it, as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact. Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity; it is in reality no longer expected, or recognised as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced "Patronage," that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be "twice cursed;" cursing him that gives, and him that takes! And thus, in regard to outward matters also, it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern Honor; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder; we may question, whether, without

great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant further, and for Burns it is granting much, that with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay, it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shakspeare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and

his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only a *fence*, and haws? How, indeed, could the "nobility and gentry of his native land" hold out any help to this "Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country?" Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough interests to strengthen; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate? Less than adequate in general: a few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of them were poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as with thumb-screws, from the hard hand; and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might, are all melted, or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's merely selfish endeavors are fated to do: and here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But, better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, "Love one another, bear one another's burdens," given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life, we shall

still find ; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless*, is not the least wretched, but the most.

Still we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more, rather than with less kindness, than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favor to its Teachers : hunger and nakedness, perils and reviling, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice, have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days ; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dungeons, Tasso pines in the cell of a mad-house, Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so "persecuted they the Prophets," not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age ; that he has no right therefore to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness ; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness ; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

Where then does it lie ? We are forced to answer : With himself ; it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes, that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise ; seldom is a life morally wrecked, but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the

strength needful for its action and duration ; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man ; nay, if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death ; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human wo : yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive ; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done again : nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons ; for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial, in all its forms, no good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

We have already stated the error of Burns ; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims ; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly ; and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular verse-monger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him : and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness, and triviality, when true Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful princi-

ple of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to repel or resist; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavoring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must have lost it, without reconciling them here.

Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavor to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery, and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, sheltering himself in a Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his ease, when he composed *Paradise Lost*? Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier, and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of

leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare ?

And what then had these men, which Burns wanted ? Two things ; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals ; and a single not a double aim in their activity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers : but seekers and worshippers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object ; but a high heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom in one or the other form, ever hovered before them ; in which cause, they neither shrunk from suffering, nor called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful ; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the "golden-calf of Self-love," however curiously carved, was not their Deity ; but the Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated, and made subservient ; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks ; but its edge must be sharp and single : if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing.

Part of this superiority these men owed to their age ; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in : but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns again it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly man ; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he loves and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this ; but an

instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His Religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, "a great Perhaps."

He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to seem, "independent;" but *it was* necessary for him to be at one with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature, highest also in his life; "to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external events would for ever refuse him." He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole endeavors. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation. Poverty, neglect, and all evil, save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter to him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity.

Nay, we question whether for his culture as a Poet, poverty, and much suffering for a season, were not absolutely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean Paul, "that I had been born richer." And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: "the prisoner's allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter." But the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, "the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage."

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets, was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices, and brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Excise-man! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *a muck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness:

but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability." We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay, have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honors, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might like him have "purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan;" for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which, ere long, will fill itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth: they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this

divine behest lay smouldering within them ; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted. Yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship, will they live there ; they are first adulated, then persecuted ; they accomplish little for others ; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history, — *twice* told us in our own time ! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this : “ He, who would write heroic poems, must make his whole life a heroic poem.” If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena ; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils are for him. Let him dwindle into a modish ballad-monger ; let him worship and be-sing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him,—if, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity ! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them ; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favor of the great, or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron’s or a Burns’s strength

must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favor and furtherance for literature ; like the costliest flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit ; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted ! Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in the harness of a Dray-horse ? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands : will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites, from door to door ?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns ; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average ; nay, from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men ; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance : It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes ; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is, or is not, done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the

solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a ginhorse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured; and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them. Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged: and the pilot is therefore blame-worthy; for he has not been all-wise and all-powerful; but to know *how* blame-worthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Rams-gate and the Isle of Dogs.

With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration, he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his Works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye. For this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!

LIFE OF ROBERT BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS, the chief of the peasant poets of Scotland, was born in a little mud-walled cottage on the banks of Doon, near "Alloway's auld haunted kirk," in the shire of Ayr, on the 25th day of January, 1759. As a natural mark of the event, a sudden storm at the same moment swept the land: the gable-wall of the frail dwelling gave way, and the babe-bard was hurried through a tempest of wind and sleet to the shelter of a securer hovel. He was the eldest born of three sons and three daughters; his father, William, who in his native Kincardineshire, wrote his name Burness, was bred a gardener, and sought for work in the West; but coming from the lands of the noble family of the Keiths, a suspicion accompanied him that he had been out—as rebellion was softly called—in the forty-five: a suspicion fatal to his hopes of rest and bread, in so loyal a district; and it was only when the clergyman of his native parish certified his loyalty that he was permitted to toil. This suspicion of Jacobitism, revived by Burns himself, when he rose into fame, seems not to have influenced either the feelings, or the tastes of Agnes Brown, a young woman on the Doon, whom he wooed and married in December, 1757, when he was thirty-six years old. To support her, he leased a small

piece of ground, which he converted into a nursery and garden, and to shelter her, he raised with his own hands that humble abode where she gave birth to her eldest son.

The elder Burns was a well-informed, silent, austere man, who endured no idle gaiety, nor indecorous language : while he relaxed somewhat the hard, stern creed of the Covenanting times, he enforced all the work-day, as well as sabbath-day observances, which the Calvinistic kirk requires, and scrupled at promiscuous dancing, as the staid of our own day scruple at the waltz. His wife was of a milder mood : she was blest with a singular fortitude of temper ; was as devout of heart, as she was calm of mind ; and loved, while busied in her household concerns, to sweeten the bitterer moments of life, by chanting the songs and ballads of her country, of which her store was great. The garden and nursery prospered so much, that he was induced to widen his views, and by the help of his kind landlord, the laird of Doonholm, and the more questionable aid of borrowed money, he entered upon a neighboring farm, named Mount Oliphant, extending to an hundred acres. This was in 1765 ; but the land was hungry and sterile ; the seasons proved rainy and rough ; the toil was certain, the reward unsure ; when to his sorrow, the laird of Doonholm—a generous Ferguson—died : the strict terms of the lease, as well as the rent, were exacted by a harsh factor, and with his wife and children, he was obliged, after a losing struggle of six years, to relinquish the farm, and seek shelter on the grounds of Lochlea, some ten miles off, in the parish of Tarbolton. When, in after-days, men's characters were in the hands of his eldest son, the scoundrel factor sat for that lasting portrait of insolence and wrong, in the "Twa Dogs."

In this new farm William Burns seemed to strike root, and thrive. He was strong of body and ardent of mind : every day brought increase of vigor to his three sons, who, though very young, already put their hands to the plough, the reap-hook, and the flail. But it seemed that nothing which he undertook was decreed in the end to prosper : after four seasons of prosperity a change ensued : the farm was far from cheap ; the gains under any lease were then so little, that the loss of a few pounds was ruinous to a farmer : bad seed and wet seasons had their usual influence : “ The gloom of hermits and the moil of galley-slaves,” as the poet, alluding to those days, said, were endured to no purpose ; when to crown all, a difference arose between the landlord and the tenant, as to the terms of the lease ; and the early days of the poet, and the declining years of his father, were harassed by disputes, in which sensitive minds are sure to suffer.

Amid these labors and disputes, the poet's father remembered the worth of religious, and moral instruction : he took part of this upon himself. A week-day in Lochlea wore the sober looks of a Sunday : he read the Bible and explained, as intelligent peasants are accustomed to do, the sense, when dark or difficult ; he loved to discuss the spiritual meanings, and gaze on the mystical splendors of the Revelations. He was aided in these labors, first, by the schoolmaster of Alloway-mill, near the Doon ; secondly, by John Murdoch, student of divinity, who undertook to teach arithmetic, grammar, French, and Latin, to the boys of Lochlea, and the sons of five neighboring farmers. Murdoch, who was an enthusiast in learning, much of a pedant, and such a judge of genius that he thought wit should always be laughing, and poetry wear an eternal smile, performed his task well : he found

Robert to be quick of apprehension, and not afraid to study when knowledge was the reward. He taught him to turn verse into its natural prose order; to supply all the ellipses, and not to desist till the sense was clear and plain: he also, in their walks, told him the names of different objects, both in Latin and French: and though his knowledge of these languages never amounted to much, he approached the grammar of the English tongue, through the former, which was of material use to him, in his poetic compositions. Burns was, even in those early days, a sort of enthusiast in all that concerned the glory of Scotland; he used to fancy himself a soldier of the days of the Wallace and the Bruce: loved to strut after the bag-pipe and the drum, and read of the bloody struggles of his country for freedom and existence, till "a Scottish prejudice," he says, "was poured into my veins, which will boil there till the flood-gates of life are shut in eternal rest."

In this mood of mind Burns was unconsciously approaching the land of poesie. In addition to the histories of the Wallace and the Bruce, he found, on the shelves of his neighbors, not only whole bodies of divinity, and sermons without limit, but the works of some of the best English, as well as Scottish poets, together with songs and ballads innumerable. On these he loved to pore whenever a moment of leisure came; nor was verse his sole favorite; he desired to drink knowledge at any fountain, and Guthrie's Grammar, Dickson on Agriculture, Addison's Spectator, Locke on the Human Understanding, and Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin were as welcome to his heart as Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, Thomson and Young. There is a mystery in the workings of genius: with these poets in his head and hand,

we see not that he has advanced one step in the way in which he was soon to walk; "Highland Mary," and "Tam o' Shanter," sprang from other inspirations.

Burns lifts up the veil himself, from the studies which made him a poet. "In my boyish days," he says to Moore, "I owed much to an old woman (Jenny Wilson) who resided in the family, remarkable for her credulity and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs, concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elfcandles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cant-raips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a look-out on suspicious places." Here we have the young poet taking lessons in the classic lore of his native land: in the school of Janet Wilson he profited largely; her tales gave a hue, all their own, to many noble effusions. But her teaching was at the hearth-stone: when he was in the fields, either driving a cart or walking to labor, he had ever in his hand a collection of songs, such as any stall in the land could supply him with; and over these he pored, ballad by ballad, and verse by verse, noting the true, tender, and the natural sublime from affectation and fustian. "To this," he said, "I am convinced that I owe much of my critic craft, such as it is." His mother, too, unconsciously led him in the ways of the muse; she loved to recite or sing to him a strange, but clever ballad, called "the Life and Age of Man:" this strain of piety and imagination was in his mind when he wrote "Man was made to Mourn."

He found other teachers — of a tenderer nature and

softer influence. "You know," he says to Moore, "our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself: she was in truth a bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass, and unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys. How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; I never expressly said I loved her: indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evenings from our labors; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp, and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly, and it was her favorite reel to which I attempted to give an embodied vehicle in rhyme; thus with me began love and verse." This intercourse with the fair part of the creation, was, to his slumbering emotions, a voice from heaven to call them into life and poetry.

From the school of traditionary lore and love, Burns now went to a rougher academy. Lochlea, though not producing fine crops of corn, was considered excellent for flax; and while the cultivation of this commodity was committed to his father and his brother Gilbert, he was sent to Irvine, at Midsummer, 1781, to learn the trade of a flax-dresser, under one Peacock, kinsman to his mother. Some time before, he had spent a portion of a summer at a school in Kirkoswald, learning mensuration and land-surveying, where he had mingled in scenes of sociality

with smugglers, and enjoyed the pleasure of a silent walk, under the moon, with the young and the beautiful. At Irvine, he labored by day to acquire a knowledge of his business, and at night he associated with the gay and the thoughtless, with whom he learnt to empty his glass, and indulge in free discourse on topics forbidden at Lochlea. He had one small room for a lodging, for which he gave a shilling a week: meat he seldom tasted, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal and potatoes sent from his father's house. In a letter to his father, written with great purity and simplicity of style, he thus gives a picture of himself, mental and bodily, "Honored Sir, I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on new year's day, but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees: the weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind that I dare neither review past wants nor look forward into futurity, for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produce most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal and indeed my only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life. As for the world, I despair of ever making a figure in it: I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably

await me, and I am in some measure prepared and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were but too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late." This remarkable letter was written in the twenty-second year of his age; it alludes to the illness which seems to have been the companion of his youth, a nervous headache, brought on by constant toil and anxiety; and it speaks of the melancholy which is the common attendant of genius, and its sensibilities, aggravated by despair of distinction. The catastrophe which happened ere this letter was well in his father's hand, accords ill with quotations from the Bible, and hopes fixed in heaven:—"As we gave," he says, "a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire, and burnt to ashes, and I was left like a true poet, not worth a sixpence."

This disaster was followed by one more grievous; his father was well in years when he was married, and age and a constitution injured by toil and disappointment, began to press him down, ere his sons had grown up to man's estate. On all sides the clouds began to darken; the farm was unprosperous: the speculations in flax failed; and the landlord of Lochlea, raising a question upon the meaning of the lease, concerning rotation of crop, pushed the matter to a law-suit, alike ruinous to a poor man either in its success or its failure. "After three years tossing and whirling," says Burns, "in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stept in, and carried him away to where the "wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." His

all went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice. The finishing evil which brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.'"

Robert Burns was now the head of his father's house. He gathered together the little that law and misfortune had spared, and took the farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline, containing one hundred and eighteen acres, at a rent of ninety pounds a year: his mother and sisters took the domestic superintendence of home, barn, and byre; and he associated his brother Gilbert in the labors of the land. It was made a joint affair: the poet was young, willing, and vigorous, and excelled in ploughing, sowing, reaping, mowing, and thrashing. His wages were fixed at seven pounds per annum, and such for a time was his care and frugality, that he never exceeded this small allowance. He purchased books on farming, held conversations with the old and the knowing; and said unto himself, "I shall be prudent and wise, and my shadow shall increase in the land." But it was not decreed that these resolutions were to endure, and that he was to become a mighty agriculturist in the west. Farmer Attention, as the proverb says, is a good farmer, all the world over, and Burns was such by fits and by starts. But he who writes an ode on the sheep he is about to shear, a poem on the flower that he covers with the furrow, who sees visions on his way to market, who makes rhymes on the horse he is about to yoke, and a song on the girl who shows the whitest hands among his reapers, has small chance of leading a market, or of being laird of the fields he rents. The dreams of

Burns were of the muses, and not of rising markets, of golden locks rather than of yellow corn: he had other faults. It is not known that William Burns was aware before his death that his eldest son had sinned in rhyme; but we have Gilbert's assurance, that his father went to the grave in ignorance of his son's errors of a less venial kind—unwitting that he was soon to give a two-fold proof of both in "Rob the Rhymer's Address to his Bastard Child"—a poem less decorous than witty.

The dress and condition of Burns when he became a poet were not at all poetical, in the minstrel meaning of the word. His clothes, coarse and homely, were made from home-grown wool, shorn off his own sheeps' backs, carded and spun at his own fire-side, woven by the village weaver, and when not of natural hoddengray, dyed a half-blue in the village vat. They were shaped and sewed by the district tailor, who usually wrought at the rate of a groat a day and his food; and as the wool was coarse, so also was the workmanship. The linen which he wore was home-grown, home-hackled, home-spun, home-woven, and home-bleached, and unless designed for Sunday use, was of coarse, strong harn, to suit the tear and wear of barn and field. His shoes came from rustic tanpits, for most farmers then prepared their own leather; were armed sole and heel, with heavy, broad-headed nails, to endure the clod and the road: as hats were then little in use, save among small lairds or country gentry, westland heads were commonly covered with a coarse, broad, blue bonnet, with a stopple on its flat crown, made in thousands at Kilmar-nock, and known in all lands by the name of score bonnets. His plaid was a handsome red and white check—for pride in poets, he said, was no sin—prepared of fine wool with more than common care, by the hands of his

mother and sisters, and woven with more skill than the village weaver was usually required to exert. His dwelling was in keeping with his dress, a low, thatched house, with a kitchen, a bed-room and closet, with floors of kneaded clay, and ceilings of moorland turf; a few books on a shelf, thumbed by many a thumb; a few hams drying above head in the smoke, which was in no haste to get out at the roof—a wooden settle, some oak chairs, chaff beds well covered with blankets, with a fire of peat and wood burning at a distance from the gable wall, on the middle of the floor. His food was as homely as his habitation, and consisted chiefly of oatmeal-porridge, barley-broth and potatoes, and milk. How the muse happened to visit him in this clay biggin, take a fancy to a clout-erly peasant, and teach him strains of consummate beauty and elegance, must ever be a matter of wonder to all those, and they are not few, who hold that noble sentiments and heroic deeds are the exclusive portion of the gently nursed and the far descended.

Of the earlier verses of Burns few are preserved: when composed he put them on paper, but he kept them to himself: though a poet at sixteen, he seems not to have made even his brother his confidante till he became a man, and his judgment had ripened. He, however, made a little clasped paper book his treasurer, and under the head of "Observations, Hints, Songs, and Scraps of Poetry," we may find many a wayward and impassioned verse, songs rising little above the humblest country strain, or bursting into an elegance and a beauty worthy of the highest of minstrels. The first words noted down are the stanzas which he composed on his fair companion of the harvest-field, out of whose hands he loved to remove the nettle-stings and the thistles: the prettier song, be-

ginning "Now wastlin win's and slaughtering guns," written on the lass of Kirkoswald, with whom, instead of learning mensuration, he chose to wander under the light of the moon : a strain better still, inspired by the charms of a neighboring maiden, of the name of Annie Ronald : another, of equal merit, arising out of his nocturnal adventures among the lasses of the west : and, finally that crowning glory of all his lyric compositions, "Green grow the rushes." This little clasped book, however, seems not to have been made his confidante till his twenty-third or twenty-fourth year : he probably admitted to its pages only the strains which he loved most, or such as had taken a place in his memory : at whatever age it was commenced, he had then begun to estimate his own character, and intimate his fortunes, for he calls himself in its pages "a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it."

We have not been told how welcome the incense of his songs rendered him to the rustic maidens of Kyle : women are not apt to be won by the charms of verse ; they have little sympathy with dreamers on Parnassus, and allow themselves to be influenced by something more substantial than the roses and lilies of the muse. Burns had other claims to their regard than those arising from poetic skill : he was tall, young, good-looking, with dark, bright eyes, and words and wit at will : he had a sarcastic sally for all lads who presumed to cross his path, and a soft, persuasive word for all lasses on whom he fixed his fancy : nor was this all—he was adventurous and bold in love trystes and love excursions : long, rough roads, stormy nights, flooded rivers, and lonesome places were no letts to him ; and when the dangers or labors of the way were braved, he was alike skilful in eluding vigilant

aunts, wakerife mothers, and envious or suspicious sisters : for rivals he had a blow as ready as he had a word, and was familiar with snug stack-yards, broomy glens, and nooks of hawthorn and honeysuckle, where maidens love to be wooed. This rendered him dearer to woman's heart than all the lyric effusions of his fancy ; and when we add to such allurements, a warm, flowing, and persuasive eloquence, we need not wonder that woman listened and was won ; that one of the most charming damsels of the West said, an hour with him in the dark was worth a lifetime of light with any other body ; or that the accomplished and beautiful Duchess of Gordon declared, in a latter day, that no man ever carried her so completely off her feet as Robert Burns.

It is one of the delusions of the poet's critics and biographers, that the sources of his inspiration are to be found in the great classic poets of the land, with some of whom he had from his youth been familiar : there is little or no trace of them in any of his compositions. He read and wondered—he warmed his fancy at their flame, he corrected his own natural taste by theirs, but he neither copied nor imitated, and there are but two or three allusions to Young and Shakspeare in all the range of his verse. He could not but feel that he was the scholar of a different school, and that his thirst was to be slaked at other fountains. The language in which those great bards embodied their thoughts was unapproachable to an Ayrshire peasant ; it was to him as an almost foreign tongue ; he had to think and feel in the not ungraceful or inharmoonious language of his own vale, and then, in a manner, translate it into that of Pope or of Thomson, with the additional difficulty of finding English words to express the exact meaning of those of Scotland, which had chiefly

been retained because equivalents could not be found in the more elegant and grammatical tongue. Such strains as those of the polished Pope or the sublimer Milton were beyond his power, less from deficiency of genius than from lack of language : he could, indeed, write English with ease and fluency ; but when he desired to be tender or impassioned, to persuade or subdue, he had recourse to the Scottish, and he found it sufficient.

The goddesses or the Dalilahs of the young poet's song were, like the language in which he celebrated them, the produce of the district ; not dames high and exalted, but lasses of the barn and of the byre, who had never been in higher company than that of shepherds or ploughmen, or danced in a politer assembly than that of their fellow-peasants, on a barn-floor, to the sound of the district fiddle. Nor even of these did he choose the loveliest to lay out the wealth of his verse upon : he has been accused, by his brother among others, of lavishing the colors of his fancy on very ordinary faces. "He had always," says Gilbert, "a jealousy of people who were richer than himself ; his love, therefore, seldom settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one, out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination : and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her." "My heart," he himself, speaking of those days, observes, "was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other." Yet, it must be acknowledged that sufficient room exists for believing that Burns and his brethren of the West had very different

notions of the captivating and the beautiful ; while they were moved by rosy cheeks and looks of rustic health, he was moved, like a sculptor, by beauty of form or by harmony of motion, and by expression, which lightened up ordinary features and rendered them captivating. Such, I have been told, were several of the lasses of the West, to whom, if he did not surrender his heart, he rendered homage ; and both elegance of form and beauty of face were visible to all in those of whom he afterwards sang—the Hamiltons and the Burnets of Edinburgh, and the Millers and M'Murdos of the Nith.

The mind of Burns took now a wider range : he had sung of the maidens of Kyle in strains not likely soon to die, and though not weary of the softnesses of love, he desired to try his genius on matters of a sterner kind,—what those subjects were he tells us ; they were homely and at hand, of a native nature and of Scottish growth : places celebrated in Roman story, vales made famous in Grecian song—hills of vines and groves of myrtle had few charms for him. “I am hurt,” thus he writes in August, 1785, “to see other towns, rivers, woods, and haughs of Scotland immortalized in song, while my dear native county, the ancient Bailleries of Carrick, Kyle and Cunningham, famous in both ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants—a county where civil and religious liberty have ever found their first support and their asylum—a county, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many great events recorded in history, particularly the actions of the glorious Wallace—yet we have never had one Scotch poet of any eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes of Ayr, and the mountainous

source and winding sweep of the Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick and Tweed. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas ! I am far unequal to the task, both in genius and education." To fill up with glowing verse the outline which this sketch indicates, was to raise the long-laid spirit of national song — to waken a strain to which the whole land would yield response — a miracle unattempted — certainly unperformed — since the days of the Gentle Shepherd. It is true that the tongue of the muse had at no time been wholly silent ; that now and then a burst of sublime wo, like the song of " Mary, weep no more for me," and of lasting merriment and humor, like that of " Tibbie Fowler," proved that the fire of natural poesie smouldered, if it did not blaze ; while the social strains of the unfortunate Ferguson revived in the city, if not in the field, the memory of him who sang the " Monk and the Miller's wife." But notwithstanding these and other productions of equal merit, Scottish poesie, it must be owned, had lost much of its original ecstasy and fervor, and that the boldest efforts of the muse no more equalled the songs of Dunbar, of Douglas, of Lyndsay, and of James the Fifth, than the sound of an artificial cascade resembles the undying thunders of Corra.

To accomplish this required an acquaintance with man beyond what the forge, the change-house, and the marketplace of the village supplied ; a look further than the barn-yard and the furrowed field, and a livelier knowledge and deeper feeling of history than, probably, Burns ever possessed. To all ready and accessible sources of knowledge he appears to have had recourse ; he sought matter for his muse in the meetings, religious as well as social, of the district — consorted with staid matrons, grave plodding farmers — with those who preached as well as those

who listened — with sharp-tongued attorneys, who laid down the law over a Mauchline gill — with country squires, whose wisdom was great in the game-laws, and in contested elections — and with roving smugglers, who at that time hung, as a cloud, on all the western coast of Scotland. In the company of farmers and fellow-peasants, he witnessed scenes which he loved to embody in verse, saw pictures of peace and joy, now woven into the web of his song, and had a poetic impulse given to him both by cottage devotion and cottage merriment. If he was familiar with love and all its outgoings and incomings — had met his lass in the midnight shade, or walked with her under the moon, or braved a stormy night and a haunted road for her sake — he was as well acquainted with the joys which belong to social intercourse, when instruments of music speak to the feet, when the reek of punch-bowls gives a tongue to the staid and demure, and bridal festivity, and harvest-homes, bid a whole valley lift up its voice and be glad. It is more difficult to decide what poetic use he could make of his intercourse with that loose and lawless class of men, who, from love of gain, broke the laws and braved the police of their country : that he found among smugglers, as he says, “men of noble virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and modesty,” is easier to believe than that he escaped the contamination of their sensual manners and prodigality. The people of Kyle regarded this conduct with suspicion : they were not to be expected to know that when Burns ranted and boused with smugglers, conversed with tinkers huddled in a kiln, or listened to the riotous mirth of a batch of “randie gangrel bodies” as they “toomed their powks and pawned their duds,” for liquor in Poosy Nansie’s, he was taking sketches for the future entertain-

ment and instruction of the world ; they could not foresee that from all this moral strength and poetic beauty would arise.

While meditating something better than a ballad to his mistress's eyebrow, he did not neglect to lay out the little skill he had in cultivating the grounds of Mossgiel. The prosperity in which he found himself in the first and second seasons, induced him to hope that good fortune had not yet forsaken him : a genial summer and a good market seldom come together to the farmer, but at first they came to Burns ; and to show that he was worthy of them, he bought books on agriculture, calculated rotation of crops, attended sales, held the plough with diligence, used the scythe, the reap-hook, and the flail, with skill, and the malicious even began to say that there was something more in him than wild sallies of wit and foolish rhymes. But the farm lay high, the bottom was wet, and in a third season, indifferent seed and a wet harvest robbed him at once of half his crop ; he seems to have regarded this as an intimation from above, that nothing which he undertook would prosper : and consoled himself with joyous friends and with the society of the muse. The judgment cannot be praised which selected a farm with a wet cold bottom, and sowed it with unsound seed ; but that man who despairs because a wet season robs him of the fruits of his field, is unfit for the warfare of life, where, fortitude is as much required as by a general on a field of battle, when the tide of success threatens to flow against him. The poet seems to have believed, very early in life, that he was none of the elect of Mammon ; that he was too much of a genius ever to acquire wealth by steady labor, or by, as he loved to call it, gin-horse prudence, or grubbing industry.

And yet there were hours and days in which Burns, even when the rain fell on his unhoused sheaves, did not wholly despair of himself: he labored, nay sometimes he slaved on his farm; and at intervals of toil, sought to embellish his mind with such knowledge as might be useful, should chance, the goddess who ruled his lot, drop him upon some of the higher places of the land. He had, while he lived at Tarbolton, united with some half-dozen young men, all sons of farmers in that neighborhood, in forming a club, of which the object was to charm away a few evening hours in the week with agreeable chit-chat, and the discussion of topics of economy or love. Of this little society the poet was president, and the first question they were called on to settle was this, "Suppose a young man bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women; the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them, a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behavior, but without any fortune, which of them shall he choose?" This question was started by the poet, and once every week the club were called to the consideration of matters connected with rural life and industry: their expenses were limited to threepence a week; and till the departure of Burns to the distant Moss-giel, the club continued to live and thrive; on his removal it lost the spirit which gave it birth, and was heard of no more; but its aims and its usefulness were revived in Mauchline, where the poet was induced to establish a society which only differed from the other in spending the moderate fines arising from non-attendance, on books, instead of liquor. Here, too, Burns was the president,

and the members were chiefly the sons of husbandmen, whom he found, he said, more natural in their manners, and more agreeable than the self-sufficient mechanics of villages and towns, who are ready to dispute on all topics, and inclined to be convinced on none. This club had the pleasure of subscribing for the first edition of the works of its great associate. It has been questioned by his first biographer, whether the refinement of mind, which follows the reading of books of eloquence and delicacy,—the mental improvement resulting from such calm discussions as the Tarbolton and Mauchline clubs indulged in, was not injurious to men engaged in the barn and at the plough. A well-ordered mind will be strengthened, as well as embellished, by elegant knowledge, while over those naturally barren and ungenial all that is refined or noble will pass as a sunny shower scuds over lumps of granite, bringing neither warmth nor life.

In the account which the poet gives to Moore of his early poems, he says little about his exquisite lyrics, and less about “The Death and dying Words of Poor Mailie,” or her “Elegy,” the first of his poems where the inspiration of the muse is visible; but he speaks with exultation of the fame which those indecorous sallies, “Holy Willie’s Prayer” and “The Holy Tulzie” brought from some of the clergy, and the people of Ayrshire. The west of Scotland is ever in the van, when matters either political or religious are agitated. Calvinism was shaken at this time, with a great controversy among its professors, of which it is enough to say, that while one party rigidly adhered to the word and letter of the Confession of Faith, and preached up the palmy and wholesome days of the Covenant, the other sought to soften the harsher rules and observances of the kirk, and to bring moderation and

charity into its discipline as well as its councils. Both believed themselves right, both were loud and hot, and personal,—bitter with a bitterness only known in religious controversy. The poet sided with the professors of the New Light, as the more tolerant were called, and handled the professors of the Old Light, as the other party were named, with the most unsparing severity. For this he had sufficient cause:—he had experienced the mercilessness of kirk discipline, when his frailties caused him to visit the stool of repentance; and moreover his friend Gavin Hamilton, a writer in Mauchline, had been sharply censured by the same authorities, for daring to gallop on Sundays. Moodie, of Ricarton, and Russel, of Kilmarnock, were the first who tasted of the poet's wrath. They, though professors of the Old Light, had quarrelled, and, it is added, fought: "The Holy Tulzie," which recorded, gave at the same time wings to the scandal; while for "Holy Willie," an elder of Mauchline, and an austere and hollow pretender to righteousness, he reserved the fiercest of all his lampoons. In "Holy Willie's Prayer," he lays a burning hand on the terrible doctrine of predestination: this is a satire, daring, personal, and profane. Willie claims praise in the singular, acknowledges folly in the plural, and makes heaven accountable for his sins! In a similar strain of undevout satire he congratulates Goudie, of Kilmarnock, on his *Essays on Revealed Religion*. These poems, particularly the two latter, are the sharpest lampoons in the language.

While drudging in the cause of the New Light controversialists, Burns was not unconsciously strengthening his hands for worthier toils: the applause which selfish divines bestowed on his witty, but graceless effusions, could not

be enough for one who knew how fleeting the fame was which came from the heat of party disputes ; nor was he insensible that songs of a beauty unknown for a century to national poesie, had been unregarded in the hue and cry which arose on account of "Holy Willie's Prayer" and "The Holy Tulzie." He hesitated to drink longer out of the agitated puddle of Calvinistic controversy, he resolved to slake his thirst at the pure well-springs of patriot feeling and domestic love ; and accordingly, in the last and best of his controversial compositions, he rose out of the lower regions of lampoon into the upper air of true poetry. "The Holy Fair," though stained in one or two verses with personalities, exhibits a scene glowing with character and incident and life : the aim of the poem is not so much to satirize one or two Old Light divines, as to expose and rebuke those almost indecent festivities, which in too many of the western parishes accompanied the administration of the sacrament. In the earlier days of the church, when men were staid and sincere, it was, no doubt, an impressive sight to see rank succeeding rank, of the old and the young, all calm and all devout, seated before the tent of the preacher, in the sunny hours of June, listening to his eloquence, or partaking of the mystic bread and wine ; but in these our latter days, when discipline is relaxed, along with the sedate and the pious come swarms of the idle and the profligate, whom no eloquence can edify and no solemn rite affect. On these, and such as these, the poet has poured his satire ; and since this desirable reprehension the Holy Fairs, east as well as west, have become more decorous, if not more devout.

His controversial sallies were accompanied, or followed, by a series of poems which showed that national character and manners, as Lockhart has truly and happily said,

were once more in the hands of a national poet. These compositions are both numerous and various : they record the poet's own experience and emotions ; they exhibit the highest moral feeling, the purest patriotic sentiments, and a deep sympathy with the fortunes, both here and hereafter, of his fellow-men ; they delineate domestic manners, man's stern as well as social hours, and mingle the serious with the joyous, the sarcastic with the solemn, the mournful with the pathetic, the amiable with the gay, and all with an ease and an unaffected force and freedom known only to the genius of Shakspeare. In "The Twa Dogs" he seeks to reconcile the laborer to his lot, and intimates, by examples drawn from the hall as well as the cottage, that happiness resides in the humblest abodes, and is even partial to the clouted shoe. In "Scotch Drink" he excites man to love his country, by precepts both heroic and social ; and proves that while wine and brandy are the tipples of slaves, whiskey and ale are the drink of the free ; sentiments of a similar kind distinguish his "Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons," each of whom he exhorts by name to defend the remaining liberties and immunities of his country. A higher tone distinguishes the "Address to the Deil :" he records all the names, and some of them are strange ones ; and all the acts, and some of them are as whimsical as they are terrible, of this far kened and noted personage ; to these he adds some of the fiend's doings as they stand in Scripture, together with his own experiences ; and concludes by a hope, as unexpected as merciful and relenting, that Satan may not be exposed to an eternity of torments. "The Dream" is a humorous sally, and may be almost regarded as prophetic. The poet feigns himself present, in slumber, at the Royal

birth-day ; and supposes that he addresses his majesty, on his household matters as well as the affairs of the nation. Some of the princes, it has been satirically hinted, behaved afterwards in such a way as if they wished that the scripture of the Burns should be fulfilled : in this strain he has imitated the license and equalled the wit of some of the elder Scottish Poets.

“ The Vision ” is wholly serious ; it exhibits the poet in one of those fits of despondency which the dull, who have no misgivings, never know : he dwells with sarcastic bitterness on the opportunities which, for the sake of song, he has neglected of becoming wealthy, and is drawing a sad parallel between rags and riches, when the muse steps in and cheers his despondency, by assuring him of undying fame. “ Halloween ” is a strain of a more homely kind, recording the superstitious beliefs, and no less superstitious doings of old Scotland, on that night, when witches and elves and evil spirits are let loose among the children of men : it reaches far back into manners and customs, and is a picture, curious and valuable. The tastes and feelings of husbandmen inspired “ The old Farmer’s Address to his old mare Maggie,” which exhibits some pleasing recollections of his days of courtship and hours of sociality. The calm, tranquil picture of household happiness and devotion in “ The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” has induced Hogg, among others, to believe that it has less than usual of the spirit of the poet, but it has all the spirit that was required ; the toil of the week has ceased, the laborer has returned to his well-ordered home—his “ cozie ingle and his clean hearth-stane,”—and with his wife and children beside him, turns his thoughts to the praise of that God to whom he owes all : this he performs with a reverence and an awe, at once natural,

national, and poetic. "The Mouse" is a brief and happy and very moving poem: happy, for it delineates, with wonderful truth and life, the agitation of the mouse when the coulter broke into its abode, and moving, for the poet takes the lesson of ruin to himself, and feels the present and dreads the future. "The Mountain Daisy," once, more properly, called by Burns "The Gowan," resembles "The Mouse" in incident and moral, and is equally happy, in language and conception. "The Lament" is a dark, and all but tragic page, from the poet's own life. "Man was made to Mourn" takes the part of the humble and the homeless, against the coldness and selfishness of the wealthy and the powerful, a favorite topic of meditation with Burns. He refrained, for awhile, from making "Death and Doctor Hornbook" public; a poem which deviates from the offensiveness of personal satire, into a strain of humor, at once airy and original.

His epistles in verse may be reckoned amongst his happiest productions: they are written in all moods of mind, and are, by turns, lively and sad; careless and serious;—now giving advice, then taking it; laughing at learning, and lamenting its want; scoffing at propriety and wealth; yet admitting, that without the one he cannot be wise, nor wanting the other, independent. The Epistle to David Sillar is the first of these compositions: the poet has no news to tell, and no serious question to ask: he has only to communicate his own emotions of joy, or of sorrow, and these he relates and discusses with singular elegance as well as ease, twining, at the same time, into the fabric of his composition, agreeable allusions to the taste and affections of his correspondent. He seems to have rated the intellect of Sillar as the highest amongst his rustic friends: he pays him more deference, and addresses him in a higher vein than

he observes to others. The Epistles to Lapraik, to Smith, and to Rankine, are in a more familiar, or social mood, and lift the veil from the darkness of the poet's condition, and exhibit a mind of first-rate power, groping, and that surely, its way to distinction, in spite of humility of birth, obscurity of condition, and the coldness of the wealthy or the titled. The epistles of other poets owe some of their fame to the rank or the reputation of those to whom they are addressed; those of Burns are written, one and all, to nameless and undistinguished men. Sillar was a country schoolmaster, Lapraik a moorland laird, Smith a small shop-keeper, and Rankine a farmer, who loved a gill and a joke. Yet these men were the chief friends, the only literary associates of the poet, during those early years, in which, with some exceptions, his finest works were written.

Burns, while he was writing the poems, the chief of which we have named, was a laboring husbandman on the little farm of Mossgiel, a pursuit which affords but few leisure hours for either reading or pondering; but to him the stubble-field was musing-ground, and the walk behind the plough, a twilight saunter on Parnassus. As, with a careful hand and a steady eye, he guided his horses, and saw an evenly furrow turned up by the share, his thoughts were on other themes; he was straying in haunted glens, when spirits have power—looking in fancy on the lasses “skelping barefoot,” in silks and in scarlets, to a field-preaching—walking in imagination with the rosie widow, who on Halloween ventured to dip her left sleeve in the burn where three lairds' lands met—making the “bottle clunk,” with joyous smugglers, on a lucky run of gin or brandy—or if his thoughts at all approached his acts—he was moralizing on the daisy oppressed by the furrow

which his own plough-share had turned. That his thoughts were thus wandering we have his own testimony, with that of his brother Gilbert; and were both wanting, the certainty that he composed the greater part of his immortal poems in two years, from the summer of 1784 to the summer of 1786, would be evidence sufficient. The muse must have been strong within him, when, in spite of the rains and sleets of the "ever-dropping west" — when in defiance of the hot and sweaty brows occasioned by reaping and thrashing — declining markets, and showery harvests — the clamor of his laird for his rent, and of his tradesman for his account, he persevered in song, sought solace in verse, when all other solace was denied him.

The circumstances under which his principal poems were composed, have been related: the "Lament of Mailie" found its origin in the catastrophe of a pet ewe; the "Epistle to Sillar" was confided by the poet to his brother while they were engaged in weeding the kale-yard; the "Address to the Deil" was suggested by the many strange portraits which belief or fear had drawn of Satan, and was repeated by the one brother to the other, on the way with their carts to the kiln, for lime; the "Cotter's Saturday Night" originated in the reverence with which the worship of God was conducted in the family of the poet's father, and in the solemn tone with which he desired his children to compose themselves for praise and prayer; "the Mouse," and its moral companion "the Daisy," were the offspring of the incidents which they relate: and "Death and Doctor Hornbook" was conceived at a freemason-meeting, where the hero of the piece had shown too much of the pedant, and composed on his way home, after midnight, by the poet, while

his head was somewhat dizzy with drink. One of the most remarkable of his compositions, the "Jolly Beggars," a drama, to which nothing in the language of either the North or South can be compared, and which was unknown till after the death of the author, was suggested by a scene which he saw in a low ale-house, into which, on a Saturday-night, most of the sturdy beggars of the district had met to sell their meal, pledge their superfluous rags, and drink their gains. It may be added, that he loved to walk in solitary spots; that his chief musing-ground was the banks of the Ayr; the season most congenial to his fancy was winter, when the winds were heard in the leafless woods, and the voice of the swollen streams came from vale and hill; and that he seldom composed a whole poem at once, but satisfied with a few fervent verses, laid the subject aside, till the muse summoned him to another exertion of fancy. In a little back closet, still existing in the farm-house of Mossgiel, he committed most of his poems to paper.

But while the poet rose, the farmer sank. It was not the cold clayey bottom of his ground, nor the purchase of unsound seed-corn, nor the fluctuation in the markets alone, which injured him: neither was it the taste for freemason socialities, nor a desire to join the mirth of comrades, either of the sea or the shore; neither could it be wholly imputed to his passionate following of the softer sex — indulgence in the "illicit rove," or giving way to his eloquence at the feet of one whom he loved and honored; other farmers indulged in the one, or suffered from the other, yet were prosperous. His want of success arose from other causes; his heart was not with his task, save by fits and starts: he felt he was designed for higher purposes than ploughing, and harrowing, and sowing,

and reaping : when the sun called on him, after a shower, to come to the plough, or when the ripe corn invited the sickle, or the ready market called for the measured grain, the poet was under other spells, and was slow to avail himself of those golden moments, which come but once in the season. To this may be added, a too superficial knowledge of the art of farming, and a want of intimacy with the nature of the soil he was called to cultivate. He could speak fluently of leas, and faughs, and fallows, of change of seed, and rotation of crops, but practical knowledge and application were required, and in these Burns was deficient. The moderate gain which those dark days of agriculture brought to the economical farmer, was not obtained : the close, the all but niggardly care by which he could win and keep his crown-pieces, — gold was seldom in the farmer's hand, — was either above or below the mind of the poet ; and Mossiel, which, in the hands of an assiduous farmer, might have made a reasonable return for labor, was unproductive, under one who had little skill, less economy, and no taste for the task.

Other reasons for his failure have been assigned. It is to the credit of the moral sentiments of the husbandmen of Scotland, that when one of their class forgets what virtue requires, and dishonors, without reparation, even the humblest of the maidens, he is not allowed to go unpunished. No proceedings take place, perhaps one hard word is not spoken ; but he is regarded with loathing by the old and the devout ; he is looked on by all with cold and reproachful eyes — sorrow is foretold as his lot, sure disaster as his fortune ; and if these chance to arrive, the only sympathy expressed is, “ What better could he expect ? ” Something of this sort befell Burns : he had already satisfied the kirk in the matter of “ Sonsie, smirk-

ing, dear-bought Bess," his daughter, by one of his mother's maids ; and now, to use his own words, he was brought within point-blank of the heaviest metal of the kirk by a similar folly. The fair transgressor, both for her father's sake and her own youth, had a large share of public sympathy. Jean Armour, for it is of her I speak, was in her eighteenth year ; with dark eyes, a handsome foot, and a melodious tongue, she made her way to the poet's heart—and, as their stations in life were equal, it seemed that they had only to be satisfied themselves to render their union easy. But her father, in addition to being a very devout man, was a zealot of the Old Light ; and Jean, dreading his resentment, was willing, while she loved its unforgiven satirist, to love him in secret, in the hope that the time would come when she might safely avow it : she admitted the poet, therefore, to her company in lonesome places, and walks beneath the moon, where they both forgot themselves, and were at last obliged to own a private marriage as a protection from kirk censure. The professors of the Old Light rejoiced, since it brought a scoffing rhymer within reach of their hand ; but her father felt a two-fold sorrow, because of the shame of a favorite daughter, and for having committed the folly with one both loose in conduct and profane of speech. He had cause to be angry, but his anger, through his zeal, became tyrannous : in the exercise of what he called a father's power, he compelled his child to renounce the poet as her husband and burn the marriage-lines ; for he regarded her marriage, without the kirk's permission, with a man so utterly cast away, as a worse crime than her folly. So blind is anger ! She could renounce neither her husband nor his offspring in a lawful way, and in spite of the destruction of the marriage-

lines, and renouncing the name of wife, she was as much Mrs. Burns as marriage could make her. No one concerned seemed to think so. Burns, who loved her tenderly, went all but mad when she renounced him : he gave up his share of Mossgiel to his brother, and roamed, moody and idle, about the land, with no better aim in life than a situation in one of our western sugar-isles, and a vague hope of distinction as a poet.

How the distinction which he desired as a poet was to be obtained was, to a poor bard in a provincial place, a sore puzzle : there were no enterprising booksellers in the western land, and it was not to be expected that the printers of either Kilmarnock or Paisley had money to expend on a speculation in rhyme : it is much to the honor of his native county that the publication which he wished for was at last made easy. The best of his poems, in his own hand-writing, had found their way into the hands of the Ballantynes, Hamiltons, Parkers, and Mackenzies, and were much admired. Mrs. Stewart, of Stair and Afton, a lady of distinction and taste, had made, accidentally, the acquaintance both of Burns and some of his songs, and was ready to befriend him ; and so favorable was the impression on all hands, that a subscription, sufficient to defray the outlay of paper and print, was soon filled up—one hundred copies being subscribed for by the Parkers alone. He soon arranged materials for a volume, and put them into the hands of a printer in Kilmarnock, the Wee Johnnie of one of his biting epigrams. Johnnie was startled at the unceremonious freedom of most of the pieces, and asked the poet to compose one of modest language and moral aim, to stand at the beginning, and excuse some of those free ones which followed : Burns, whose “ Twa Dogs ” was then incomplete, finished

the poem at a sitting, and put it in the van, much to his printer's satisfaction. If the "Jolly Beggars" was omitted for any other cause than its freedom of sentiment and language, or "Death and Doctor Hornbook" from any other feeling than that of being too personal, the causes of their exclusion have remained a secret. It is less easy to account for the omission of many songs of high merit, which he had among his papers: perhaps he thought those which he selected were sufficient to test the taste of the public. Before he printed the whole, he, with the consent of his brother, altered his name from Burness to Burns, a change which, I am told, he in after years regretted.

In the summer of the year 1786 the little volume, big with the hopes and fortunes of the bard, made its appearance: it was entitled simply, "Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect; by Robert Burns;" and accompanied by a modest preface, saying, that he submitted his book to his country with fear and with trembling, since it contained little of the art of poesie, and at the best was but a voice given, rude, he feared, and uncouth, to the loves, the hopes, and the fears of his own bosom. Had a summer sun risen on a winter morning it could not have surprised the Lowlands of Scotland more than this Kilmarnock volume surprised and delighted the people, one and all. The milkmaid sang his songs, the ploughman repeated his poems; the old quoted both, and even the devout rejoiced that idle verse had at last mixed a tone of morality with its mirth. The volume penetrated even into Nithsdale. "Keep it out of the way of your children," said a Cameronian divine, when he lent it to my father, "lest ye find them, as I found mine, reading it on the Sabbath." No wonder that such a volume made its way to the hearts

of a peasantry whose taste in poetry has been the marvel of many writers : the poems were mostly on topics with which they were familiar : the language was that of the fireside, raised above the vulgarities of common life, by a purifying spirit of expression and the exalting fervor of inspiration : and there was such a brilliant and graceful mixture of the elegant and the homely, the lofty and the low, the familiar and the elevated,—such a rapid succession of scenes which moved to tenderness or tears ; or to subdued mirth or open laughter—unlooked for allusions to scripture, or touches of sarcasm and scandal—of superstitions to scare, and of humor to delight—while through the whole was diffused, as the scent of flowers through summer air, a moral meaning—a sentimental beauty, which sweetened and sanctified all. The poet's expectations from this little venture were humble : he hoped as much money from it as would pay for his passage to the West Indies, where he proposed to enter into the service of some of the Scottish settlers, and help to manage the double mystery of sugar-making and slavery.

The hearty applause which I have recorded came chiefly from the husbandman, the shepherd and the mechanic : the approbation of the magnates of the west, though not less warm, was longer in coming. Mrs. Stewart of Stair, indeed, commended the poems and cheered their author : Dugald Stewart received his visits with pleasure, and wondered at his vigor of conversation as much as at his muse : the door of the house of Hamilton was open to him, where the table was ever spread, and the hand ever ready to help : while the purses of the Ballantynes and the Parkers were always as open to him as were the doors of their houses. Those persons must be regarded

as the real patrons of the poet : the high names of the district are not to be found among those who helped him with purse and patronage in 1786, that year of deep distress and high distinction. The Montgomeries came with their praise when his fame was up; the Kennedys and the Boswells were silent : and though the Cunninghams gave effectual aid, it was when the muse was crying with a loud voice before him, "Come all and see the man whom I delight to honor." It would be unjust as well as ungenerous not to mention the name of Mrs. Dunlop among the poet's best and early patrons : the distance at which she lived from Mossgiel had kept his name from her till his poems appeared : but his works induced her to desire his acquaintance, and she became his warmest and surest friend.

To say the truth, Burns endeavored in every honorable way to obtain the notice of those who had influence in the land : he copied out the best of his unpublished poems in a fair hand, and inserting them in his printed volume, presented it to those who seemed slow to buy : he rewarded the notice of this one with a song — the attentions of that one with a sally of encomiastic verse : he left psalms of his own composing in the manse when he feasted with a divine : he enclosed "Holy Willie's Prayer," with an injunction to be grave, to one who loved mirth : he sent the "Holy Fair" to one whom he invited to drink a gill out of a mutchkin stoup, at Mauchline market ; and on accidentally meeting with Lord Daer, he immediately commemorated the event in a sally of verse, of a strain more free and yet as flattering as ever flowed from the lips of a court bard. While musing over the names of those on whom fortune had smiled, yet who had neglected to smile on him, he remembered that he had

met Miss Alexander, a young beauty of the west, in the walks of Ballochmyle ; and he recorded the impression which this fair vision made on him in a song of unequalled elegance and melody. He had met her in the woods in July, on the 18th of November he sent her the song, and reminded her of the circumstance from which it arose, in a letter which it is evident he had labored to render polished and complimentary. The young lady took no notice of either the song or the poet, though willing, it is said, to hear of both now : — this seems to have been the last attempt he made on the taste or the sympathies of the gentry of his native district : for on the very day following we find him busy in making arrangements for his departure to Jamaica.

For this step Burns had more than sufficient reasons : the profits of his volume amounted to little more than enough to waft him across the Atlantic : Wee Johnnie, though the edition was all sold, refused to risk another on speculation : his friends, both Ballantynes and Parkers, volunteered to relieve the printer's anxieties, but the poet declined their bounty, and gloomily indented himself in a ship about to sail from Greenock, and called on his muse to take farewell of Caledonia, in the last song he ever expected to measure in his native land. That fine lyric, beginning "The gloomy night is gathering fast," was the offspring of these moments of regret and sorrow. His feelings were not expressed in song alone : he remembered his mother and his natural daughter, and made an assignment of all that pertained to him at Mossgiel — and that was but little — and of all the advantage which a cruel, unjust, and insulting law allowed in the proceeds of his poems, for their support and behoof. This document was publicly read in the presence of the poet, at

the market-cross of Ayr, by his friend William Chalmers, a notary public. Even this step was to Burns one of danger : some ill-advised person had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at his heels, and he was obliged to shelter himself as he best could, in woods, it is said, by day and in barns by night, till the final hour of his departure came. That hour arrived, and his chest was on the way to the ship, when a letter was put into his hand which seemed to light him to brighter prospects.

Among his friends whom his merits had procured him was Dr. Laurie, a district clergyman, who had taste enough to admire the deep sensibilities as well as the humor of the poet, and the generosity to make known both his works and his worth to the warm-hearted and amiable Blacklock, who boldly proclaimed him a poet of the first rank, and lamented that he was not in Edinburgh to publish another edition of his poems. Burns was ever a man of impulse : he recalled his chest from Greenock ; he relinquished the situation he had accepted on the estate of one Douglas ; took a secret leave of his mother, and, without an introduction to any one, and unknown personally to all, save Dugald Stewart, away he walked, through Glenap, to Edinburgh, full of new hope and confiding in his genius. When he arrived, he scarcely knew what to do : he hesitated to call on the professor : he refrained from making himself known, as it has been supposed he did, to the enthusiastic Blacklock ; but, sitting down in an obscure lodging, he sought out an obscure printer, recommended by a humble comrade from Kyle, and began to negotiate for a new edition of the Poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman. This was not the way to go about it : his barge had well nigh been shipwrecked in the launch ; and he might have lived to regret the letter which

hindered his voyage to Jamaica, had he not met by chance in the street a gentleman of the west, of the name of Dalzell, who introduced him to the Earl of Glencairn, a nobleman whose classic education did not hurt his taste for Scottish poetry, and who was not too proud to lend his helping hand to a rustic stranger of such merit as Burns. Cunningham carried him to Creech, then the Murray of Edinburgh, a shrewd man of business, who opened the poet's eyes to his true interests : the first proposals, then all but issued, were put in the fire, and new ones printed and diffused over the island. The subscription was headed by half the noblemen of the north : the Caledonian Hunt, through the interest of Glencairn, took six hundred copies : duchesses and countesses swelled the list, and such a crowding to write down names had not been witnessed since the signing of the solemn league and covenant.

While the subscription-papers were filling and the new volume printing on a paper and in a type worthy of such high patronage, Burns remained in Edinburgh, where, for the winter season, he was a lion, and one of an unwonted kind. Philosophers, historians, and scholars had shaken the elegant coteries of the city with their wit, or enlightened them with their learning, but they were all men who had been polished by polite letters or by intercourse with high life, and there was a sameness in their very dress as well as address, of which peers and peeresses had become weary. They therefore welcomed this rustic candidate for the honor of giving wings to their hours of lassitude and weariness, with a welcome more than common ; and when his approach was announced, the polished circle looked for the advent of a lout from the plough, in whose uncouth manners and embarrassed address they might

find matter both for mirth and wonder. But they met with a barbarian who was not at all barbarous : as the poet met in Lord Daer feelings and sentiments as natural as those of a ploughman, so they met in a ploughman manners worthy of a lord : his air was easy and unperplexed : his address was perfectly well-bred, and elegant in its simplicity : he felt neither eclipsed by the titled nor struck dumb before the learned and the eloquent, but took his station with the ease and grace of one born to it. In the society of men alone he spoke out : he spared neither his wit, his humor, nor his sarcasm — he seemed to say to all — “I am a man, and you are no more ; and why should I not act and speak like one ?” — it was remarked, however, that he had not learnt, or did not desire, to conceal his emotions — that he commended with more rapture than was courteous, and contradicted with more bluntness than was accounted polite. It was thus with him in the company of men : when woman approached, his look altered, his eye beamed milder ; all that was stern in his nature underwent a change, and he received them with deference, but with a consciousness that he could win their attention as he had won that of others who differed, indeed, from them only in the texture of their kirtles. This natural power of rendering himself acceptable to woman had been observed and envied by Sillar, one of the dearest of his early comrades ; and it stood him in good stead now, when he was the object to whom the Duchess of Gordon, the loveliest as well as the wittiest of women — directed her discourse. Burns, she afterwards said, won the attention of the Edinburgh ladies by a deferential way of address — by an ease and natural grace of manners, as new as it was unexpected — that he told them the stories of some of his tenderest songs or liveliest

poems in a style quite magical—enriching his little narratives, which had one and all the merit of being short, with personal incidents of humor or of pathos.

In a party, when Dr. Blair and Professor Walker were present, Burns related the circumstances under which he had composed his melancholy song, “The gloomy night is gathering fast,” in a way even more touching than the verses: and in the company of the ruling beauties of the time, he hesitated not to lift the veil from some of the tenderer parts of his own history, and give them glimpses of the romance of rustic life. A lady of birth—one of his most willing listeners—used, I am told, to say, that she should never forget the tale which he related of his affection for Mary Campbell, his Highland Mary, as he loved to call her. She was fair, he said, and affectionate, and as guileless as she was beautiful; and beautiful he thought her in a very high degree. The first time he saw her was during one of his musing walks in the woods of Montgomery Castle; and the first time he spoke to her was during the merriment of a harvest-kirn. There were others there who admired her, but he addressed her, and had the luck to win her regard from them all. He soon found that she was the lass whom he had long sought, but never before found—that her good looks were surpassed by her good sense; and her good sense was equalled by her discretion and modesty. He met her frequently: she saw by his looks that he was sincere; she put full trust in his love, and used to wander with him among the green knowes and stream-banks till the sun went down and the moon rose, talking, dreaming of love and the golden days which awaited them. He was poor, and she had only her half-year’s fee, for she was in the condition of a servant; but thoughts of gear never darkened their dream; they

resolved to wed, and exchanged vows of constancy and love. They plighted their vows on the Sabbath to render them more sacred—they made them by a burn, where they had courted, that open nature might be a witness—they made them over an open Bible, to show that they thought of God in this mutual act—and when they had done they both took water in their hands, and scattered it in the air, to intimate that as the stream was pure so were their intentions. They parted when they did this, but they parted never to meet more: she died in a burning fever, during a visit to her relations to prepare for her marriage; and all that he had of her was a lock of her long bright hair, and her Bible, which she exchanged for his.

Even with the tales which he related of rustic love and adventure his own story mingled; and ladies of rank heard, for the first time, that in all that was romantic in the passion of love, and in all that was chivalrous in sentiment, men of distinction, both by education and birth, were at least equalled by the peasantry of the land. They listened with interest, and inclined their ears beside the bard, to hear how love went on in the west, and in no case it ran quite smooth. Sometimes young hearts were kept asunder by the sordid feelings of parents, who could not be persuaded to bestow their daughter, perhaps an only one, on a wooer who could not count penny for penny, and number cow for cow: sometimes a mother desired her daughter to look higher than to one of her station; for her beauty and her education entitled her to match among the lairds, rather than the tenants; and sometimes, the devotional tastes of both father and mother, approving of personal looks and connexions, were averse to see a daughter bestow her hand on one, whose language in religion was indiscreet, and whose morals were suspected.

Yet, neither the vigilance of fathers, nor the suspicious care of aunts and mothers, could succeed in keeping those asunder whose hearts were together; but in these meetings, circumspection and invention were necessary; all fears were to be lulled by the seeming carelessness of the lass,—all perils were to be met and braved by the spirit of the lad. His home, perhaps, was at a distance, and he had wild woods to come through, and deep streams to pass, before he could see the signal-light, now shown and now withdrawn, at her window; he had to approach with a quick eye and a wary foot, lest a father or a brother should see, and deter him: he had sometimes to wish for a cloud upon the moon, whose light, welcome to him on his way in the distance, was likely to betray him when near; and he not unfrequently reckoned a wild night of wind and rain as a blessing, since it helped to conceal his coming, and proved to his mistress that he was ready to brave all for her sake. Of rivals met and baffled; of half-willing and half-unconsenting maidens, persuaded and won; of the light-hearted and the careless becoming affectionate and tender; and the coy, the proud, and the satiric being gained by “persuasive words, and more persuasive sighs,” as dames had been gained of old, he had tales enow. The ladies listened, and smiled at the tender narratives of the poet.

Of his appearance among the sons as well as the daughters of men, we have the account of Dugald Stewart. “Burns,” says the philosopher, “came to Edinburgh early in the winter: the attentions which he received from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the

country: his dress was suited to his station; plain and unpretending, with sufficient attention to neatness: he always wore boots, and when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches. His manners were manly, simple, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without any indication of forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him, and listened with apparent deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somehow decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments, than the fluency and precision and originality of language, when he spoke in company: more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotsmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to have been fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature, and I recollect he once told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which cottages contained."

Such was the impression which Burns made at first on the fair, the titled, and the learned of Edinburgh; an im-

pression which, though lessened by intimacy and closer examination, on the part of men, remained unimpaired, on that of the softer sex, till his dying-day. His company, during the season of balls and festivities, continued to be courted by all who desired to be reckoned gay or polite. Cards of invitation fell thick on him; he was not more welcome to the plumed and jewelled groups, whom her fascinating Grace of Gordon gathered about her, than he was to the grave divines and polished scholars, who assembled in the rooms of Stewart, or Blair, or Robertson. The classic socialities of Tytler, afterwards Lord Woodhouslee, or the elaborate supper-tables of the whimsical Monboddo, whose guests imagined they were entertained in the manner of Lucullus or of Cicero, were not complete without the presence of the ploughman of Kyle; and the feelings of the rustic poet, facing such companies, though of surprise and delight at first, gradually subsided he said, as he discerned that man differed from man only in the polish, and not in the grain. But Edinburgh offered tables and entertainers of a less orderly and staid character than those I have named—where the glass circulated with greater rapidity; where the wit flowed more freely; and where there were neither high-bred ladies to charm conversation within the bounds of modesty, nor serious philosophers, nor grave divines, to set a limit to the license of speech, or the hours of enjoyment. To these companions—and these were all of the better classes, the levities of the rustic poet's wit and humor were as welcome as were the tenderest of his narratives to the accomplished Duchess of Gordon and the beautiful Miss Burnet of Monboddo: they raised a social roar not at all classic, and demanded and provoked his sallies of wild humor, or indecorous mirth, with as much delight as he

had witnessed among the lads of Kyle, when at mill or forge, his humorous sallies abounded as the ale flowed. In these enjoyments the rough, but learned William Nicol, and the young and amiable Robert Ainslie shared : the name of the poet was coupled with those of profane wits, free livers, and that class of half-idle gentlemen who hang about the courts of law, or for a season or two wear the livery of Mars, and handle cold iron.

Edinburgh had still another class of genteel convivialists, to whom the poet was attracted by principles as well as by pleasure ; these were the relics of that once numerous body, the Jacobites, who still loved to cherish the feelings of birth or education, rather than of judgment, and toasted the name of Stuart, when the last of the race had renounced his pretensions to a throne, for the sake of peace and the cross. Young men then, and high names were among them, annually met on the pretender's birthday, and sang songs in which the white rose of Jacobitism flourished ; toasted toasts announcing adherence to the male line of the Bruce and the Stuart, and listened to the strains of the laureate of the day, who prophesied, in drink, the dismissal of the intrusive Hanoverian, by the right and might of the righteous and disinherited line. Burns, who was descended from a northern race, whose father was suspected of having drawn the claymore in 1745, and who loved the blood of the Keith-Marishalls, under whose banners his ancestors had marched, readily united himself to a band in whose sentiments, political and social, he was a sharer. He was received with acclamation : the dignity of laureate was conferred upon him, and his inauguration ode, in which he recalled the names and the deeds of the Grahams, the Erskines, the Boyds, and the Gordons, was applauded for its fire, as well as

for its sentiments. Yet though he ate and drank and sang with Jacobites, he was only, as far as sympathy and poesie went, of their number : his reason renounced the principles and the religion of the Stuart line ; and though he shed a tear over their fallen fortunes—though he sympathized with the brave and honorable names that perished in their cause—though he cursed “the butcher, Cumberland,” and the bloody spirit which commanded the heads of the good and the heroic to be stuck where they would affright the passer-by, and pollute the air—he had no desire to see the splendid fabric of constitutional freedom, which the united genius of all parties had raised, thrown wantonly down. His Jacobitism influenced, not his head, but his heart, and gave a mournful hue to many of his lyric compositions.

Meanwhile his poems were passing through the press. Burns made a few emendations of those published in the Kilmarnock edition, and he added others which, as he expressed it, he had carded and spun, since he passed Glenbuck. Some rather coarse lines were softened or omitted in the “Twa Dogs ;” others, from a change of his personal feelings, were made in the “Vision :” “Death and Doctor Hornbook,” excluded before, was admitted now : the “Dream” was retained, in spite of the remonstrances of Mrs. Stewart, of Stair, and Mrs. Dunlop ; and the “Brigs of Ayr,” in compliment to his patrons in his native district, and the “Address to Edinburgh,” in honor of his titled and distinguished friends in that metropolis, were printed for the first time. He was unwilling to alter what he had once printed : his friends, classic, titled, and rustic, found him stubborn and unpliant, in matters of criticism ; yet he was generally of a complimentary mood : he loaded the robe of Coila in the “Vision,” with more

scenes than it could well contain, that he might include in the landscape, all the country-seats of his friends, and he gave more than their share of commendation to the Wallaces, out of respect to his friend, Mrs. Dunlop. Of the critics of Edinburgh he said, they spun the thread of their criticisms so fine that it was unfit for either warp or weft; and of its scholars, he said, they were never satisfied with any Scottish poet, unless they could trace him in Horace. One morning at Dr. Blair's breakfast-table, when the "Holy Fair" was the subject of conversation, the reverend critic said, "Why should

'—— Moodie speel the holy door
With tidings of *salvation*?"

if you had said, with tidings of *damnation*, the satire would have been the better, and the bitterer." "Excellent!" exclaimed the poet, "the alteration is capital, and I hope you will honor me by allowing me to say in a note at whose suggestion it was made." Professor Walker, who tells the anecdote, adds that Blair evaded, with equal good humor and decision, this not very polite request; nor was this the only slip which the poet made on this occasion; some one asked him in which of the churches of Edinburgh he had received the highest gratification: he named the High-church, but gave the preference over all preachers to Robert Walker, the colleague and rival in eloquence of Dr. Blair himself, and that in a tone so pointed and decisive as to make all at the table stare and look embarrassed. The poet confessed afterwards that he never reflected on his blunder without pain and mortification. Blair probably had this in his mind, when, on reading the poem beginning "When Guildford good our pilot stood," he exclaimed, "Ah! the politics of Burns

always smell of the smithy," meaning, that they were vulgar and common.

In April, the second or Edinburgh, edition was published : it was widely purchased, and was warmly commended. The country had been prepared for it by the generous and discriminating criticisms of Henry Mackenzie, published in that popular periodical, "The Lounger," where he says, "Burns possessés the spirit as well as the fancy of a poet; that honest pride and independence of soul, which are sometimes the muse's only dower, break forth on every occasion, in his works." The praise of the author of the "Man of Feeling" was not more felt by Burns, than it was by the whole island; the harp of the north had not been swept for centuries by a hand so forcible, and at the same time so varied, that it awakened every tone, whether of joy or wo : the language was that of rustic life; the scenes of the poems were the dusty barn, the clay-floored reeky cottage, and the furrowed field; and the characters were cowherds, ploughmen, and mechanics. The volume was embellished by a head of the poet, from the hand of the now venerable Alexander Nasmyth; and introduced by a dedication to the noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, in a style of vehement independence, unknown hitherto in the history of subscriptions. The whole work, verse, prose, and portrait, won public attention, and kept it : and though some critics signified their displeasure at expressions which bordered on profanity, and at a license of language which they pronounced impure, by far the greater number united their praise to the all but general voice; nay, some scrupled not to call him, from his perfect ease and nature and variety, the Scottish Shakspeare. No one rejoiced more in his success and his fame, than the matron of Mossgiel.

Other matters than his poems and socialities claimed the attention of Burns in Edinburgh. He had a hearty relish for the joyous genius of Allan Ramsay; he traced out his residences, and rejoiced to think that while he stood in the shop of his own bookseller, Creech, the same floor had been trod by the feet of his great forerunner. He visited, too, the lowly grave of the unfortunate Robert Ferguson; and it must be recorded to the shame of the magistrates of Edinburgh, that they allowed him to erect a headstone to his memory, and to the scandal of Scotland, that in such a memorial he had not been anticipated. He seems not to have regarded the graves of scholars or philosophers; and he trod the pavements where the warlike princes and nobles had walked without any emotion. He loved, however, to see places celebrated in Scottish song, and fields where battles for the independence of his country had been stricken; and, with money in his pocket which his poems had produced, and with a letter from a witty but weak man, Lord Buchan, instructing him to pull birks on the Yarrow, broom on the Cowden-knowes, and not to neglect to admire the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, Burns set out on a border tour, accompanied by Robert Ainslie, of Berrywell. As the poet had talked of returning to the plough, Dr. Blair imagined that he was on his way back to the furrowed field, and wrote him a handsome farewell, saying he was leaving Edinburgh with a character which had survived many temptations; with a name which would be placed with the Ramsays and the Fergusons, and with the hopes of all that, in a second volume, on which his fate as a poet would very much depend, he might rise yet higher in merit and in fame. Burns, who received this communication when laying his leg over the saddle to be gone, is said to have muttered, "Aye, but a man's first

book is sometimes like his first babe, healthier and stronger than those which follow."

On the 6th of May, 1787, Burns reached Berrywell: he recorded of the laird, that he was clear headed, and of Miss Ainslie, that she was amiable and handsome — of Dudgeon, the author of "The Maid that tends the Goats," that he had penetration and modesty, and the preacher, Bowmaker, that he was a man of strong lungs and vigorous remark. On crossing the Tweed at Coldstream he took off his hat, and kneeling down, repeated aloud the two last verses of the "Cotter's Saturday Night:" on returning, he drank tea with Brydone, the traveller, a man, he said, kind and benevolent: he cursed one Cole as an English Hottentot, for having rooted out an ancient garden belonging to a Romish ruin; and he wrote of Macdowal, of Caverton-mill, that by his skill in rearing sheep, he sold his flocks, ewe and lamb, for a couple of guineas each: that he washed his sheep before shearing — and by his turnips improved sheep-husbandry; he added, that lands were generally let at sixteen shillings the Scottish acre: the farmers rich, and compared to Ayrshire, their houses magnificent. On his way to Jedburgh he visited an old gentleman in whose house was an arm-chair, once the property of the author of "The Seasons;" he reverently examined the relique, and could scarcely be persuaded to sit in it: he was a warm admirer of Thomson.

In Jedburgh Burns found much to interest him: the ruins of a splendid cathedral, and of a strong castle — and, what was still more attractive, an amiable young lady, very handsome, with "beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit, sparkling with delicious moisture," and looks which betokened a high order of female mind. He gave her his portrait, and entered this remembrance of her attractions among his

memoranda :— “ My heart is thawed into melting pleasure, after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. I am afraid my bosom has nearly as much tinder as ever. Jed, pure be thy streams, and hallowed thy sylvan banks : sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love ! ” With the freedom of Jedburgh handsomely bestowed by the magistrates, in his pocket, Burns made his way to Wauchope, the residence of Mrs. Scott, who had welcomed him into the world as a poet in verses lively and graceful : he found her, he said, “ a lady of sense and taste, and of a decision peculiar to female authors. ” After dining with Sir Alexander Don, who, he said, was a clever man, but far from a match for his divine lady, a sister of his patron Glencairn, he spent an hour among the beautiful ruins of Dryburgh Abbey ; glanced on the splendid remains of Melrose ; passed, unconscious of the future, over that ground on which have arisen the romantic towers of Abbotsford ; dined with certain of the Souters of Selkirk ; and visited the old keep of Thomas the Rhymer, and a dozen of the hills and streams celebrated in song. Nor did he fail to pay his respects, after returning through Dunse, to Sir James Hall, of Dunglass, and his lady, and was much pleased with the scenery of their romantic place. He was now joined by a gentleman of the name of Kerr, and crossing the Tweed a second time, penetrated into England, as far as the ancient town of Newcastle, where he smiled at a facetious Northumbrian, who at dinner caused the beef to be eaten before the broth was served, in obedience to an ancient injunction, lest the hungry Scotch should come and snatch it. On

his way back he saw, what proved to be prophetic of his own fortune — the roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock : he took out his journal, and wrote with a troubled brow, " Rigid economy, and decent industry ; do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis personæ*, in such a scene of horror." He extended his tour to Carlisle, and from thence to the banks of the Nith, where he looked at the farm of Ellisland, with the intention of trying once more his fortune at the plough, should poetry and patronage fail him.

On his way through the West, Burns spent a few days with his mother at Mossgiel : he had left her an unknown and an almost banished man : he returned in fame and in sunshine, admired by all who aspired to be thought tasteful or refined. He felt offended alike with the patrician stateliness of Edinburgh and the plebeian servility of the husbandmen of Ayrshire ; and dreading the influence of the unlucky star which had hitherto ruled his lot, he bought a pocket Milton, he said, for the purpose of studying the intrepid independence and daring magnanimity, and noble defiance of hardships exhibited by Satan ! In this mood he reached Edinburgh — only to leave it again on three hurried excursions into the Highlands. The route which he took and the sentiments which the scenes awakened, are but faintly intimated in the memoranda which he made. His first journey seems to have been performed in ill-humor ; at Stirling his Jacobitism, provoked at seeing the ruined palace of the Stuarts, broke out in some unloyal lines, which he had the indiscretion to write with a diamond on the window of a public inn. At Carron, where he was refused a sight of the magnificent foundry, he avenged himself in epigram. At Inverary he resented some real or imaginary neglect on the part of

his Grace of Argyll, by a stinging lampoon ; nor can he be said to have fairly regained his serenity of temper, till he danced his wrath away with some Highland ladies at Dumbarton.

His second excursion was made in the company of Dr. Adair, of Harrowgate : the reluctant doors of Carron foundry were opened to him, and he expressed his wonder at the blazing furnaces and broiling labors of the place ; he removed the disloyal lines from the window of the inn at Stirling, and he paid a two days' visit to Ramsay of Ochertyre, a distinguished scholar, and discussed with him future topics for the muse. "I have been in the company of many men of genius," said Ramsay afterwards to Currie, "some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him — the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire." From the Forth he went to the Devon, in the county of Clackmannan, where, for the first time, he saw the beautiful Charlotte Hamilton, the sister of his friend Gavin Hamilton, of Mauchline. "She is not only beautiful," he thus writes to her brother, "but lovely ; her form is elegant, her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness, and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree. Her eyes are fascinating ; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness and a noble mind. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress :—

" Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought."

Accompanied by this charming dame, he visited an old lady, Mrs. Bruce, of Clackmannan, who, in the belief that

she had the blood of the royal Bruce in her veins, received the poet with something of princely state, and half in jest, conferred the honor of knighthood upon him, with her ancestor's sword, saying, in true jacobitical mood, that she had a better right to do that than some folk had ! In the same pleasing company he visited the famous cataract on the Devon, called the Cauldron Linn, and the Rumbling bridge, a single arch thrown, it is said by the devil, over the Devon, at the height of a hundred feet in the air. It was the complaint of his companions that Burns exhibited no raptures, and poured out no unpremeditated verses at such magnificent scenes. But he did not like to be tutored or prompted : " Look look ! " exclaimed some one, as Carron foundry belched forth flames — " look, Burns, look ! good heavens, what a grand sight ! — look ! " " I would not look — look, sir, at your bidding," said the bard, turning away, " were it into the mouth of hell ! " When he visited, at a future time, the romantic Linn of Creehope, in Nithsdale, he looked silently at its wonders, and showed none of the hoped-for rapture. " You do not admire it, I fear," said a gentleman who accompanied him : " I could not admire it more, sir," replied Burns, " if He who made it were to desire me to do it." There are other reasons for the silence of Burns amid the scenes of the Devon : he was charmed into love by the sense and beauty of Charlotte Hamilton, and rendered her homage in that sweet song, " The Banks of the Devon," and in a dozen letters written with more than his usual care, elegance, and tenderness. But the lady was neither to be won by verse nor by prose : she afterwards gave her hand to Adair, the poet's companion, and what was less meritorious, threw his letters into the fire.

The third and last tour into the North was in the company of Nicol, of the High-School of Edinburgh : on the fields of Bannockburn and Falkirk — places of triumph and of wo to Scotland, he gave way to patriotic impulses, and in these words he recorded them — “Stirling, August 26, 1787 : this morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace ; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia, over the hole in a whinstone where Robert the Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn.” He then proceeded northward by Ochertyre, the water of Earn, the vale of Glen Almond, and the traditionary grave of Ossian. He looked in at princely Taymouth ; mused an hour or two among the Birks of Aberfeldy ; gazed from Birnam top ; paused amid the wild grandeur of the pass of Killiecrankie, at the stone which marks the spot where a second patriot Graham fell, and spent a day at Blair, where he experienced the graceful kindness of the Duke of Athol, and in a strain truly elegant, petitioned him, in the name of Bruar Water, to hide the utter nakedness of its otherwise picturesque banks, with plantations of birch and oak. Quitting Blair he followed the course of the Spey, and passing, as he told his brother, through a wild country, among cliffs gray with eternal snows, and glens gloomy and savage, reached Findhorn in mist and darkness ; visited Castle Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered Duncan ; hastened through Inverness to Urquhart Castle, and the Falls of Fyers, and turned southward to Kilravock, over the fatal moor of Culloden. He admired the ladies of that classic region for their snooded ringlets, simple elegance of dress, and expressive eyes : in Mrs. Rose, of Kilravock Castle, he found that matronly grace and dig-

nity which he owned he loved; and in the Duke and Duchess of Gordon a renewal of that more than kindness with which they had welcomed him in Edinburgh. But while he admired the palace of Fochabers, and was charmed by the condescensions of the noble proprietors, he forgot that he had left a companion at the inn, too proud and captious to be pleased at favors showered on others: he hastened back to the inn with an invitation and an apology: he found the fiery pedant in a foaming rage, striding up and down the street, cursing in Scotch and Latin the loitering postilions, for not yoking the horses, and hurrying him away. All apology and explanation was in vain, and Burns, with a vexation which he sought not to conceal, took his seat silently beside the irascible pedagogue, and returned to the South by Broughty Castle, the banks of Endermay and Queensferry. He parted with the Highlands in a kindly mood, and loved to recall the scenes and the people, both in conversation and in song.

On his return to Edinburgh he had to bide the time of his bookseller and the public: the impression of his poems extending to two thousand eight hundred copies was sold widely: much of the money had to come from a distance, and Burns lingered about the northern metropolis, expecting a settlement with Creech, and with the hope that those who dispensed his country's patronage might remember one who then, as now, was reckoned an ornament to the land. But Creech, a parsimonious man, was slow in his payments; the patronage of the country was swallowed up in the sink of politics; and though noblemen smiled, and ladies of rank nodded their jewelled heads in approbation of every new song he sung and every witty sally he uttered, they reckoned any further

notice or care superfluous : the poet, an observant man, saw all this ; but hope was the cordial of his heart, he said, and he hoped and lingered on. Too active a genius to remain idle, he addressed himself to the twofold business of love and verse. Repulsed by the stately Beauty of the Devon, he sought consolation in the society of one, as fair, and infinitely more witty ; and as an accident had for a time deprived him of the use of one of his legs, he gave wings to hours of pain, by writing a series of letters to this Edinburgh enchantress, in which he signed himself Sylvander, and addressed her under the name of Clarinda. In these compositions, which no one can regard as serious, and which James Grahame the poet called “ a romance of real Platonic affection,” amid such affectation both of language and sentiment, and a desire to say fine and startling things, we can see the proud heart of the poet throbbing in the dread of being neglected or forgotten by his country. The love which he offers up at the altar of wit and beauty, seems assumed and put on, for its rapture is artificial, and its brilliancy that of an icicle : no woman was ever wooed and won in that Malvolio way ; and there is no doubt that Mrs. M’Lehose felt as much offence as pleasure at this boisterous display of regard. In aftertimes he loved to remember her :—when wine circulated, Mrs. Mac was his favorite toast.

During this season he began his lyric contributions to the Musical Museum of Johnson, a work which, amid many imperfections of taste and arrangement, contains more of the true old music and genuine old songs of Scotland, than any other collection with which I am acquainted. Burns gathered oral airs and fitted them with words of mirth or of wo, of tenderness or of humor, with unexampléd readiness and felicity ; he eked out old fragments

and sobered down licentious strains so much in the olden spirit and feeling, that the new cannot be distinguished from the ancient : nay, he inserted lines and half lines, with such skill and nicety, that antiquarians are perplexed to settle which is genuine or which is simulated. Yet with all this he abated none of the natural mirth or the racy humor of the lyric muse of Scotland : he did not like her the less because she walked like some of the maidens of her strains, high-kilted at times, and spoke with the freedom of innocence. In these communications we observe how little his border-jaunt among the fountains of ancient song contributed either of sentiment or allusion, to his lyrics ; and how deeply his strains, whether of pity or of merriment, were colored by what he had seen, and heard, and 'felt in the Highlands. In truth, all that lay beyond the Forth was an undiscovered land to him ; while the lowland districts were not only familiar to his mind and eye, but all their more romantic vales and hills and streams were already musical in songs of such excellence as induced him to dread failure rather than hope triumph. Moreover, the Highlands teemed with jacobitical feelings, and scenes hallowed by the blood or the sufferings of men heroic, and perhaps misguided ; and the poet, willingly yielding to an impulse which was truly romantic, and believed by thousands to be loyal, penned his songs on Drumossie and Killiecrankie, as the spirit of sorrow or of bitterness prevailed. Though accompanied, during his northern excursions, by friends whose socialities and conversation forbade deep thought, or even serious remark, it will be seen by those who read his lyrics with care, that his wreath is indebted for some of its fairest flowers to the Highlands.

The second winter of the poet's abode in Edinburgh

had now arrived : it opened as might have been expected, with less rapturous welcomes and with more of frosty civility than the first. It must be confessed, that indulgence in prolonged socialities, and in company which, though clever, could not be called select, contributed to this : nor must it be forgotten that his love for the sweeter part of creation was now and then carried beyond the limits of poetic respect, and the delicacies of courtesy ; tending to estrange the austere and to lessen the admiration at first common to all. Other causes may be assigned for this wane of popularity : he took no care to conceal his contempt for all who depended on mere scholarship for eminence, and he had a perilous knack in sketching with a sarcastic hand the characters of the learned and the grave. Some indeed of the high literati of the north—Home, the author of *Douglas*, was one of them—spoke of the poet as a chance, or an accident : and though they admitted that he was a poet, yet he was not one of settled grandeur of soul, brightened by study. Burns was probably aware of this : he takes occasion in some of his letters to suggest, that the hour may be at hand when he shall be accounted by scholars as a meteor, rather than a fixed light, and to suspect that the praise bestowed on his genius was partly owing to the humility of his condition. From his lingering so long about Edinburgh, the nobility began to dread a second volume by subscription, the learned to regard him as a fierce Theban, who resolved to carry all the outworks to the temple of Fame without the labor of making regular approaches ; while a third party, and not the least numerous, looked on him with distrust, as one who hovered between Jacobite and Jacobin ; who disliked the loyal-minded, and loved to lampoon the reigning family. Besides, the marvel of the

inspired ploughman had begun to subside ; the bright gloss of novelty was worn off, and his fault lay in his unwillingness to see that he had made all the sport which the Philistines expected, and was required to make room for some "salvage" of the season, to paw, and roar, and shake the mane. The doors of the titled, which at first opened spontaneous, like those in Milton's heaven, were now unclosed for him with a tardy courtesy : he was received with measured stateliness, and seldom requested to repeat his visit. Of this changed aspect of things he complained to a friend : but his real sorrows were mixed with those of the fancy :—he told Mrs. Dunlop with what pangs of heart he was compelled to take shelter in a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle him in the mire. In this land of titles and wealth such querulous sensibilities must have been frequently offended.

Burns, who had talked lightly hitherto of resuming the plough, began now to think seriously about it, for he saw it must come to that at last. Miller, of Dalswinton, a gentleman of scientific acquirements, and who has the merit of applying the impulse of steam to navigation, had offered the poet the choice of his farms, on a fair estate which he had purchased on the Nith : aided by a westland farmer, he selected Ellisland, a beautiful spot, fit alike for the steps of ploughman or poet. On intimating this to the magnates of Edinburgh, no one lamented that a genius so bright and original should be driven to win his bread with the sweat of his brow : no one, with an indignant eye, ventured to tell those to whom the patronage of this magnificent empire was confided, that they were misusing the sacred trust, and that posterity would curse them for their coldness or neglect : neither did any of the rich

nobles, whose tables he had adorned by his wit, offer to enable him to toil free of rent, in a land of which he was to be a permanent ornament :— all were silent— all were cold—the Earl of Glencairn alone, aided by Alexander Wood, a gentleman who merits praise oftener than he is named, did the little that was done or attempted to be done for him : nor was that little done on the peer's part without solicitation :—“ I wish to go into the excise ;” thus he wrote to Glencairn ; “ and I am told your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners : and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, emboldens me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial.” The farm and the excise exhibit the poet's humble scheme of life : the money of the one, he thought, would support the toil of the other, and in the fortunate management of both he looked for the rough abundance, if not the elegancies suitable to a poet's condition.

While Scotland was disgraced by sordidly allowing her brightest genius to descend to the plough and the excise, the poet hastened his departure from a city which had witnessed both his triumph and his shame : he bade farewell in a few well-chosen words to such of the classic literati—the Blairs, the Stewarts, the Mackenzies, and the Tytlers—as had welcomed the rustic bard and continued to countenance him ; while in softer accents he bade adieu to the Clarindas and Chlorises of whose charms

he had sung, and, having wrung a settlement from Creech, he turned his steps towards Mossgiel and Mauchline. He had several reasons, and all serious ones, for taking Ayrshire in his way to the Nith: he desired to see his mother, his brothers and sisters, who had partaken of his success, and were now raised from pining penury to comparative affluence: he desired to see those who had aided him in his early struggles into the upper air—perhaps those, too, who had looked coldly on, and smiled at his outward aspirations after fame or distinction; but more than all, he desired to see one whom he once and still dearly loved, who had been a sufferer for his sake, and whom he proposed to make mistress of his fireside, and the sharer of his fortunes. Even while whispering of love to Charlotte Hamilton, on the banks of the Devon, or sighing out the affected sentimentalities of platonic or pastoral love in the ear of Clarinda, his thoughts wandered to her whom he had left bleaching her webs among the daises on Mauchline braes—she had still his heart, and in spite of her own and her father's disclamation, she was his wife. It was one of the delusions of this great poet, as well as of those good people, the Armours, that the marriage had been dissolved by the destruction of the marriage-lines, and that Robert Burns and Jean Armour were as single as though they had neither vowed nor written themselves man and wife. Be that as it may, the time was come when all scruples and obstacles were to be removed which stood in the way of their union: their hands were united by Gavin Hamilton, according to law, in April, 1788; and even the Reverend Mr. Auld, so mercilessly lampooned, smiled forgivingly as the poet satisfied a church wisely scrupulous regarding the sacred ceremony of marriage.

Though Jean Armour was but a country lass of humble degree, she had sense and intelligence, and personal charms sufficient not only to win and fix the affections of the poet, but to sanction the praise which he showered on her in song. In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, he thus describes her: "The most placid good nature and sweetness of disposition, a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure: these I think in a woman may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding." To the accomplished Margaret Chalmers, of Edinburgh, he adds, to complete the picture, "I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and kindest heart in the country: a certain late publication of Scots' poems she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the land, as she has the finest wood-note wild you ever heard." With his young wife, a punch bowl of Scottish marble, and an eight-day clock, both presents from Mr. Armour, now reconciled to his eminent son-in-law, with a new plough, and a beautiful heifer, given by Mrs. Dunlop, with about four hundred pounds in his pocket, a resolution to toil, and a hope of success, Burns made his appearance on the banks of the Nith, and set up his staff at Ellisland. This farm, now a classic spot, is about six miles up the river from Dumfries; it extends to upwards of an hundred acres: the soil is kindly; the holm-land portion of it loamy and rich, and it has at command fine walks on the river-side, and views of the Friar's Carse, Cowehill, and Dalswinton. For a while the poet had to hide his head in a smoky hovel: till a house to his fancy,

and offices for his cattle and his crops were built, his accommodation was sufficiently humble : and his mind, taking its hue from his situation, infused a bitterness into the letters in which he first made known to his western friends that he had fixed his abode in Nithsdale. "I am here," said he, "at the very elbow of existence : the only things to be found in perfection in this country are stupidity and canting : prose they only know in graces and prayers, and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiden-webs, by the ell ; as for the muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet." "This is an undiscovered clime," he at another period exclaims, "it is unknown to poetry, and prose never looked on it save in drink. I sit by the fire, and listen to the hum of the spinning-wheel : I hear, but cannot see it, for it is hidden in the smoke which eddies round and round me before it seeks to escape by window and door. I have no converse but with the ignorance which encloses me : no kenne'd face but that of my old mare, Jenny Geddes — my life is dwindled down to mere existence."

When the poet's new house was built and plenished, and the atmosphere of his mind began to clear, he found the land to be fruitful, and its people intelligent and wise. In Riddel of Friar's Carse, he found a scholar and antiquarian ; in Miller, of Dalswinton, a man conversant with science as well as with the world ; in M'Murdo, of Drumlanrig, a generous and accomplished gentleman ; and in John Syme, of Ryedale, a man much after his own heart, and a lover of the wit and socialities of polished life. Of these gentlemen Riddel, who was his neighbor, was the favorite : a door was made in the march-fence which separated Ellisland from Friar's Carse, that the poet might indulge in the retirement of the Carse hermitage,

a little lodge in the wood, as romantic as it was beautiful, while a pathway was cut through the dwarf oaks and birches which fringed the river bank, to enable the poet to saunter and muse without lett or interruption. This attention was rewarded by an inscription for the hermitage, written with elegance as well as feeling, and which was the first fruits of his fancy in this unpoetic land. In a happier strain he remembered Matthew Henderson: this is one of the sweetest as well as happiest of his poetic compositions. He heard of his friend's death, and called on nature animate and inanimate, to lament the loss of one who held the patent of his honors from God alone, and who loved all that was pure and lovely and good. "The Whistle" is another of his Ellisland compositions: the contest which he has recorded with such spirit and humor took place almost at his door: the heroes were Ferguson, of Craigdarroch, Sir Robert Laurie, of Maxwelltown, and Riddel, of the Friar's Carse: the poet was present, and drank bottle and bottle with the best, and when all was done he seemed much disposed, as an old servant at Friar's Carse remembered, to take up the victor.

Burns had become fully reconciled to Nithsdale, and was on the most intimate terms with the muse when he produced *Tam o' Shanter*, the crowning glory of all his poems. For this marvellous tale we are indebted to something like accident: Francis Grose, the antiquary, happened to visit Friar's Carse, and as he loved wine and wit, the total want of imagination was no hinderance to his friendly intercourse with the poet: "Alloway's auld haunted kirk" was mentioned, and Grose said he would include it in his illustrations of the antiquities of Scotland, if the bard of the Doon would write a poem to accompany

it. Burns consented, and before he left the table the various traditions which belonged to the ruin were passing through his mind. One of these was of a farmer, who, on a night wild with wind and rain, on passing the old kirk was startled by a light glimmering inside the walls : on drawing near he saw a caldron hung over a fire, in which the heads and limbs of children were simmering : there were neither witch nor fiend to guard it, so he unhooked the caldron, and turned out the contents, and carried it home as a trophy. A second tradition was of a man of Kyle, who, having been on a market night detained late in Ayr, on crossing the old bridge of Doon, on his way home, saw a light streaming through the gothic window of Alloway kirk, and on riding near, beheld a batch of the district witches dancing merrily round their master, the devil, who kept them "louping and flinging" to the sound of a bagpipe. He knew several of the old crones, and smiled at their gambols, for they were dancing in their smocks : but one of them, she happened to be young and rosy, had on a smock shorter than those of her companions by two spans at least, which so moved the farmer, that he exclaimed "Weel luppen Maggie wi' the short sark !" Satan stopped his music, the light was extinguished, and out rushed the hags after the farmer, who made at the gallop for the bridge of Doon, knowing that they could not cross a stream : he escaped ; but Maggie, who was foremost, seized his horse's tail at the middle of the bridge, and pulled it off in her efforts to stay him.

This poem was the work of a single day : Burns walked out to his favorite musing path, which runs towards the old tower of the Isle, along Nithside, and was observed to walk hastily and mutter as he went. His wife knew by these signs that he was engaged in composition, and

watched him from the window ; at last, wearying, and moreover wondering at the unusual length of his meditations, she took her children with her and went to meet him ; but as he seemed not to see her, she stept aside among the broom to allow him to pass, which he did with a flushed brow and dropping eyes, reciting these lines aloud :—

“Now Tam ! O, Tam ! had thae been queans,
A’ plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o’ creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen !
Thir breeks o’ mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush o’ gude blue hair,
I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies
For ae blink o’ the bonnie burdies !”

He embellished this wild tradition from fact as well as from fancy : along the road which Tam came on that eventful night his memory supplied circumstances which prepared him for the strange sight at the kirk of Alloway. A poor chapman had perished, some winters before, in the snow ; a murdered child had been found by some early hunters ; a tippling farmer had fallen from his horse at the expense of his neck, beside a “ meikle stane ;” and a melancholy old woman had hanged herself at the bush aboon the well, as the poem relates : all these matters the poet pressed into the service of the muse, and used them with a skill which adorns rather than oppresses the legend. A pert lawyer from Dumfries objected to the language as obscure : “ Obscure, sir !” said Burns ; “ you know not the language of that great master of your own art — the devil. If you had a witch for your client you would not be able to manage her defence !”

He wrote few poems after his marriage, but he composed many songs : the sweet voice of Mrs. Burns and the craving of Johnson’s Museum will in some measure

account for the number, but not for their variety, which is truly wonderful. In the history of that mournful strain, "Mary in Heaven," we read the story of many of his lyrics, for they generally sprang from his personal feelings: no poet has put more of himself into his poetry than Burns. "Robert, though ill of a cold," said his wife, "had been busy all day—a day of September, 1789, with the shearers in the field, and as he had got most of the corn into the stack-yard, was in good spirits; but when the twilight came he grew sad about something, and could not rest: he wandered first up the water-side, and then went into the stack-yard: I followed, and begged him to come into the house, as he was ill, and the air was sharp and cold. He said, 'Aye, aye,' but did not come: he threw himself down on some loose sheaves, and lay looking at the sky, and particularly at a large, bright star, which shone like another moon. At last, but that was long after I had left him, he came home—the song was already composed." To the memory of Mary Campbell he dedicated that touching ode; and he thus intimates the continuance of his early affection for "The fair-haired lass of the west," in a letter of that time to Mrs. Dunlop: "If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! There shall I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognise my lost, my ever dear Mary, whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love." These melancholy words gave way in their turn to others of a nature lively and humorous: "Tam Glen," in which the thoughts flow as freely as the waters of the Nith, on whose banks he wrote it; "Findlay," with its quiet vein of sly simplicity; "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," the first of social, and

"She's fair and fause," the first of sarcastic songs, with "The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman," are all productions of this period — a period which had besides its own fears and its own forebodings.

For a while Burns seemed to prosper in his farm: he held the plough with his own hand, he guided the harrows, he distributed the seed-corn equally among the furrows, and he reaped the crop in its season, and saw it safely covered in from the storms of winter with "thack and rape;" his wife, too, superintended the dairy with a skill which she had brought from Kyle, and as the harvest, for a season or two, was abundant, and the dairy yielded butter and cheese for the market, it seemed that "the luckless star" which ruled his lot had relented, and now shone unboding and benignly. But much more is required than toil of hand to make a successful farmer, nor will the attention bestowed only by fits and starts, compensate for carelessness or oversight; frugality, not in one thing but in all, is demanded, in small matters as well as great, while a careful mind and a vigilant eye must superintend the labors of servants, and the whole system of indoor and out-door economy. Now, during the three years which Burns stayed in Ellisland, he neither wrought with that constant diligence which farming demands, nor did he bestow upon it the unremitting attention of eye and mind which such a farm required: besides his skill in husbandry was but moderate — the rent, though of his own fixing, was too high for him and for the times; the ground, though good, was not so excellent as he might have had on the same estate — he employed more servants than the number of acres demanded, and spread for them a richer board than common: when we have said this we need not add the expensive tastes induced by

poetry, to keep readers from starting, when they are told that Burns, at the close of the third year of occupation, resigned his lease to the landlord, and bade farewell for ever to the plough. He was not, however, quite desolate ; he had for a year or more been appointed on the excise, and had superintended a district extending to ten large parishes, with applause ; indeed, it has been assigned as the chief reason for failure in his farm, that when the plough or the sickle summoned him to the field, he was to be found, either pursuing the defaulters of the revenue, among the valleys of Dumfrieshire, or measuring out pastoral verse to the beauties of the land. He retired to a house in the Bank-vennel of Dumfries, and commenced a town-life : he commenced it with an empty pocket, for Ellisland had swallowed up all the profits of his poems : he had now neither a barn to produce meal nor barley, a barn-yard to yield a fat hen, a field to which he could go at Martinmas for a mart, nor a dairy to supply milk and cheese and butter to the table — he had, in short, all to buy and little to pay with. He regarded it as a compensation that he had no farm-rent to provide, no bankruptcies to dread, no horse to keep, for his excise duties were now confined to Dumfries, and that the burthen of a barren farm was removed from his mind, and his muse at liberty to renew her unsolicited strains.

But from the day of his departure from “the barren” Ellisland, the downward course of Burns may be dated. The cold neglect of his country had driven him back indignantly to the plough, and he hoped to gain from the furrowed field that independence which it was the duty of Scotland to have provided ; but he did not resume the plough with all the advantages he possessed when he first forsook it : he had revelled in the luxuries of polished life—

his tastes had been rendered expensive as well as pure: he had witnessed, and he hoped for the pleasures of literary retirement, while the hands which had led jewelled dames over scented carpets to supper-tables loaded with silver, took hold of the hilts of the plough with more of reluctance than goodwill. Edinburgh, with its lords and ladies, its delights and its hopes, spoiled him for farming. Nor were his new labors more acceptable to his haughty spirit than those of the plough: the excise for a century had been a word of opprobrium or of hatred in the north: the duties which it imposed were regarded, not by peasants alone, as a serious encroachment upon the ancient rights of the nation, and to mislead a gauger, or resist him, even to blood, was considered by few as a fault. That the brightest genius of the nation—one whose tastes and sensibilities were so peculiarly its own—should be, as a reward, set to look after run-run and smuggled tobacco, and to gauge ale-wife's barrels, was a regret and a marvel to many, and a source of bitter merriment to Burns himself.

The duties of his situation were however performed punctually, if not with pleasure: he was a vigilant officer; he was also a merciful and considerate one: though loving a joke, and not at all averse to a dram, he walked among suspicious brewers, captious ale-wives, and frowning shopkeepers as uprightly as courteously: he smoothed the ruggedest natures into acquiescence by his gaiety and humor, and yet never gave cause for a malicious remark by allowing his vigilance to slumber. He was brave, too, and in the capture of an armed smuggler, in which he led the attack, showed that he neither feared water nor fire: he loved, also, to counsel the more forward of the smugglers to abandon their dangerous calling; his sympathy

for the helpless poor induced him to give them now and then a notice of his approach; he has been known to interpret the severe laws of the excise into tenderness and mercy in behalf of the widow and the fatherless. In all this he did but his duty to his country and his kind: and his conduct was so regarded by a very competent and candid judge. "Let me look at the books of Burns," said Maxwell, of Terraughty, at a meeting of the district magistrates, "for they show that an upright officer may be a merciful one." With a salary of some seventy pounds a year, the chance of a few guineas annually from the future editions of his poems, and the hope of rising at some distant day to the more lucrative situation of supervisor, Burns continued to live in Dumfries; first in the Bank-vennel, and next in a small house in a humble street, since called by his name.

In his earlier years the poet seems to have scattered songs as thick as a summer eve scatters its dews; nor did he scatter them less carelessly: he appears, indeed, to have thought much less of them than of his poems: the sweet song of Mary Morison, and others not at all inferior, lay unregarded among his papers till accident called them out to shine and be admired. Many of these brief but happy compositions, sometimes with his name, and oftener without, he threw in dozens at a time into Johnson, where they were noticed only by the captious Ritson: but now a work of higher pretence claimed a share in his skill: in September, 1792, he was requested by George Thomson to render, for his national collection, the poetry worthy of the muses of the north, and to take compassion on many choice airs, which had waited for a poet like the author of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, to wed them to immortal verse. To engage in such an undertaking,

Burns required small persuasion, and while Thomson asked for strains delicate and polished, the poet characteristically stipulated that his contributions were to be without remuneration, and the language seasoned with a sprinkling of the Scottish dialect. As his heart was much in the matter, he began to pour out verse with a readiness and talent unknown in the history of song: his engagement with Thomson, and his esteem for Johnson, gave birth to a series of songs as brilliant as varied, and as naturally easy as they were gracefully original. In looking over those very dissimilar collections it is not difficult to discover that the songs which he wrote for the more stately work, while they are more polished and elegant than those which he contributed to the less pretending one, are at the same time less happy in their humor and less simple in their pathos. "What pleases *me* as simple and naïve," says Burns to Thomson, "disgusts *you* as ludicrous and low. For this reason 'Fye, gie me my coggie, sirs, 'Fye, let us a' to the bridal,' with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing, while 'Saw ye my Father' delights me with its descriptive simple pathos:" we read in these words the reasons of the difference between the lyrics of the two collections.

The land where the poet lived furnished ready materials for song: hills with fine woods, vales with clear waters, and dames as lovely as any recorded in verse, were to be had in his walks and his visits; while, for the purposes of mirth or of humor, characters, in whose faces originality was legibly written, were as numerous in Nithsdale as he had found them in the west. He had been reproached, while in Kyle, with seeing charms in very ordinary looks, and hanging the garlands of the muse on unlovely altars; he was liable to no such censure in

Nithsdale ; he poured out the incense of poetry only on the fair and captivating : his Jeans, his Lucys, his Phillises, and his Jessies were ladies of such mental or personal charms as the Reynolds's and the Lawrences of the time would have rejoiced to lay out their choicest colors on. But he did not limit himself to the charms of those whom he could step out to the walks and admire : his lyrics give evidence of the wandering of his thoughts to the distant or the dead—he loves to remember Charlotte Hamilton and Mary Campbell, and think of the sighs and vows on the Devon and the Doon, while his harpstrings were still quivering to the names of the Millers and the M'Murdos—to the charms of the lasses with golden or with flaxen locks, in the valley where he dwelt. Of Jean M'Murdo and her sister Phillis he loved to sing ; and their beauty merited his strains : to one who died in her bloom, Lucy Johnston, he addressed a song of great sweetness ; to Jessie Lewars, two or three songs of gratitude and praise : nor did he forget other beauties, for the accomplished Mrs. Riddel is remembered, and the absence of fair Clarinda is lamented in strains both impassioned and pathetic.

But the main inspirer of the latter songs of Burns was a young woman of humble birth : of a form equal to the most exquisite proportions of sculpture, with bloom on her cheeks, and merriment in her large bright eyes, enough to drive an amatory poet crazy. Her name was Jean Lorimer ; she was not more than seventeen when the poet made her acquaintance, and though she had got a sort of brevet-right from an officer in the army, to use his southern name of Whelpdale, she loved best to be addressed by her maiden designation, while the poet chose to veil her in the numerous lyrics, to which she gave life,

under the names of "Chloris," "The lass of Craigie-burnwood," and "The lassie wi' the lintwhite locks." Though of a temper not much inclined to conceal anything, Burns complied so tastefully with the growing demand of the age for the exterior decencies of life, that when the scrupling dames of Caledonia sung a new song in her praise, they were as unconscious whence its beauties came, as is the lover of art, that the shape and the gracefulness of the marble nymph which he admires, are derived from a creature who sells the use of her charms indifferently to sculpture or to love. Fine poetry, like other arts called fine, springs from "strange places," as the flower in the fable said, when it bloomed on the dung-hill; nor is Burns more to be blamed than was Raphael, who painted Madonnas, and Magdalens with dishevelled hair and lifted eyes, from a loose lady, whom the pope, "Holy at Rome—here Antichrist," charitably prescribed to the artist, while he labored in the cause of the church. Of the poetic use which he made of Jean Lorimer's charms, Burns gives this account to Thomson. "The lady on whom the song of Craigie-burnwood was made is one of the finest women in Scotland, and in fact is to me in a manner what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or a friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of my best songs. Do you think that the sober gin-horse routine of existence could inspire a man with life and love and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book? No! no! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation?

Quite the contrary. I have a glorious recipe ; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poesy, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman ; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion are you delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon."

Most of the songs which he composed under the influences to which I have alluded are of the first order : "Bonnie Lesley," "Highland Mary," "Auld Rob Morris," "Duncan Gray," "Wandering Willie," "Meg o' the Mill," "The poor and honest sodger," "Bonnie Jean," "Phillis the fair," "John Anderson my Jo," "Had I a cave on some wild distant shore," "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," "Bruce's Address to his men at Bannockburn," "Auld Lang Syne," "Thine am I, my faithful fair," "Wilt thou be my dearie," "O Chloris mark how green the groves," "Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair," "Their groves of sweet myrtle," "Last May a braw wooer came down the lang glen," "O Mally's meek, Mally's sweet," "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher," "Here's a health to ane I loe dear," and the "Fairest maid on Devon banks." Many of the latter lyrics of Burns were more or less altered, to put them into better harmony with the airs, and I am not the only one who has wondered that a bard so impetuous and intractable in most matters, should have become so soft and pliable, as to make changes which too often sacrificed the poetry for the sake of a fuller and more swelling sound. It is true that the emphatic notes of the music must find their echo in the emphatic words of the verse, and that words soft and liquid are fitter for ladies' lips, than words hissing

and rough ; but it is also true that in changing a harsher word for one more harmonious, the sense often suffers, and that happiness of expression, and that dance of words which lyric verse requires, lose much of their life and vigor. The poet's favorite walk in composing his songs was on a beautiful green sward, on the northern side of the Nith, opposite Lincluden ; and his favorite posture for composition at home was balancing himself on the hind legs of his arm-chair.

While indulging in these lyrical flights, politics penetrated into Nithsdale, and disturbed the tranquillity of that secluded region. First, there came a contest for the representation of the Dumfries boroughs, between Patrick Miller, younger, of Dalswinton, and Sir James Johnstone, of Westerhall, and some two years afterwards, a struggle for the representation of the county of Kirkcudbright, between the interest of the Stewarts, of Galloway, and Patrick Heron, of Kerroughtree. In the first of these the poet mingled discretion with his mirth, and raised a hearty laugh, in which both parties joined ; for this sobriety of temper, good reasons may be assigned : Miller, the elder, of Dalswinton, had desired to oblige him in the affair of Ellisland, and his firm and considerate friend M'Murdo, of Drumlanrig, was chamberlain to his Grace of Queensbury, on whose interest Miller stood. On the other hand, his old jacobitical affections made him the secret well-wisher to Westerhall, for up to this time, at least till acid disappointment and the democratic doctrine of the natural equality of man influenced him, Burns, or as a western rhymer of his day and district worded the reproach—Rob was a Tory. His situation, it will therefore be observed, disposed him to moderation, and accounts for the milkeness of his Epistle to Fintry, in which

he marshals the chiefs of the contending factions, and foretells the fierceness of the strife, without pretending to foresee the event. Neither is he more explicit, though infinitely more humorous, in his ballad of "The Five Carlins," in which he impersonates the five boroughs — Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Lochmaben, Sanquhar, and Annan, and draws their characters as shrewd and calculating dames, met in much wrath and drink to choose a representative.

But the two or three years which elapsed between the election for the boroughs, and that for the county adjoining, wrought a serious change in the temper as well as the opinions of the poet. His Jacobitism, as has been said, was of a poetic kind, and put on in obedience to old feelings, and made no part of the man: he was in his heart as democratic as the kirk of Scotland, which educated him—he acknowledged no other superiority but the mental: "he was disposed too," said Professor Walker, "from constitutional temper, from education and the accidents of life, to a jealousy of power, and a keen hostility against every system which enabled birth and opulence to anticipate those rewards which he conceived to belong to genius and virtue." When we add to this, a resentment of the injurious treatment of the dispensers of public patronage, who had neglected his claims, and showered pensions and places on men unworthy of being named with him; we have assigned causes for the change of side and the tone of asperity and bitterness, infused into "The Heron Ballads." Formerly honey was mixed with gall; a little praise sweetened his censure: in these election lampoons he is fierce, and even venomous:—no man has a head but what is empty, nor a heart that is not black: men descended without reproach from lines of

heroes are stigmatized as cowards, and the honest and conscientious are reproached as miserly, mean, and dishonorable. Such is the spirit of party. "I have privately," thus writes the poet to Heron, "printed a good many copies of the ballads, and have sent them among friends about the country. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind, on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia, to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter and fair, candid ridicule." The ridicule was uncandid, and the laughter dishonest. The poet was unfortunate in his political attachments: Miller gained the boroughs which Burns wished he might lose, and Heron lost the county which he foretold he would gain. It must also be recorded against the good taste of the poet, that he loved to recite "The Heron Ballads," and reckon them among his happiest compositions.

From attacking others, the poet was—in the interval between penning these election lampoons—called on to defend himself; for this he seems to have been quite unprepared, though in those yeasty times he might have expected it. "I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted," he thus writes to Graham, of Fintry, "by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to Government. Sir, you are a husband and a father: you know what you would feel, to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced, from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected. I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned,

hung over my head, and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British constitution, on Revolution principles, next after my God, I am devotedly attached. To your patronage as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem as an honest man I know is my due. To these, sir, permit me to appeal: by these I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which with my latest breath I will say I have not deserved." In this letter another, intended for the eye of the Commissioners of the Board of Excise, was enclosed, in which he disclaimed entertaining the idea of a British republic—a wild drama of the day—but stood by the principles of the constitution of 1688, with the wish to see such corruptions as had crept in, amended. This last remark, it appears, by a letter from the poet to Captain Erskine, afterwards Earl of Mar, gave great offence, for Corbet, one of the superiors, was desired to inform him, "that his business was to act, and not to think; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was his duty to be silent and obedient." The intercession of Fintry, and the explanations of Burns, were so far effectual, that his political offence was forgiven, "only I understand," said he, "that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted." The records of the Excise Office exhibit no trace of this memorable matter, and two noblemen, who were then in the government, have assured me that this harsh proceeding received no countenance at head-quarters, and must have originated with some ungenerous or malicious person, on whom the poet had spilt a little of the nitric acid of his wrath.

That Burns was numbered among the republicans of Dumfries I well remember; but then those who held dif-

ferent sentiments from the men in power, were all, in that loyal town, stigmatized as democrats: that he either desired to see the constitution changed, or his country invaded by the liberal French, who proposed to set us free with the bayonet, and then admit us to the "fraternal embrace," no one ever believed. It is true that he spoke of premiers and peers with contempt; that he hesitated to take off his hat in the theatre, to the air of "God save the king;" that he refused to drink the health of Pitt, saying he preferred that of Washington — a far greater man: that he wrote bitter words against that combination of princes, who desired to put down freedom in France; that he said the titled spurred and the wealthy switched England and Scotland like two hack-horses; and that all the high-places of the land, instead of being filled by genius and talent, were occupied, as were the high-places of Israel, with idols of wood or of stone. But all this and more had been done and said before by thousands in this land, whose love of their country was never questioned. That it was bad taste to refuse to remove his hat when other heads were bared, and little better to refuse to pledge in company the name of Pitt, because he preferred Washington, cannot admit of a doubt; but that he deserved to be written down traitor, for mere matters of whim or caprice, or to be turned out of the unenvied situation of "gauging auld wives' barrels," because he thought there were some stains on the white robe of the constitution, seems a sort of tyranny new in the history of oppression. His love of country is recorded in too many undying lines to admit of a doubt now: nor is it that chivalrous love alone which men call romantic; it is a love which may be laid up in every man's heart and

practised in every man's life; the words are homely, but the words of Burns are always expressive:—

“The kettle of the kirk and state
Perhaps a clout may fail in't,
But deil a foreign tinkler loon
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Be Briton's still to Britons true,
Amang ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Shall British wrongs be righted.”

But while verses, deserving as these do to become the national motto, and sentiments loyal and generous, were overlooked and forgotten, all his rash words about freedom, and his sarcastic sallies about thrones and kings, were treasured up to his injury, by the mean and the malicious. His steps were watched and his words weighed; when he talked with a friend in the street, he was supposed to utter sedition; and when ladies retired from the table, and the wine circulated with closed doors, he was suspected of treason rather than of toasting, which he often did with much humor, the charms of woman; even when he gave as a sentiment, “May our success be equal to the justice of our cause,” he was liable to be challenged by some gunpowder captain, who thought we deserved success in war, whether right or wrong. It is true that he hated with a most cordial hatred all who presumed on their own consequence, whether arising from wealth, titles, or commissions in the army; officers he usually called “the epauletted puppies,” and lords he generally spoke of as “feather-headed fools,” who could but strut and stare and be insolent. All this was not to be endured meekly: scorn was answered with scorn; and having no answer in kind to retort his satiric

flings, his unfriends reported that it was unsafe for young men to associate with one whose principles were democratic, and scarcely either modest or safe for young women to listen to a poet whose notions of female virtue were so loose and his songs so free. These sentiments prevailed so far that a gentleman on a visit from London, told me he was dissuaded from inviting Burns to a dinner, given by way of welcome back to his native place, because he was the associate of democrats and loose people; and when a modest dame of Dumfries expressed, through a friend, a wish to have but the honor of speaking to one of whose genius she was an admirer, the poet declined the interview, with a half-serious smile, saying, "Alas! she is handsome, and you know the character publicly assigned to me." She escaped the danger of being numbered, it is likely, with the Annas and the Chlorises of his freer strains.

The neglect of his country, the tyranny of the Excise, and the downfall of his hopes and fortunes, were now to bring forth their fruits — the poet's health began to decline. His drooping looks, his neglect of his person, his solitary saunterings, his escape from the stings of reflection into socialities, and his distempered joy in the company of beauty, all spoke, as plainly as with a tongue, of a sinking heart and a declining body. Yet though he was sensible of sinking health, hope did not at once desert him: he continued to pour out such tender strains, and to show such flashes of wit and humor, at the call of Thomson, as are recorded of no other lyrist: neither did he, when in company after his own mind, hang the head, and speak mournfully, but talked and smiled and still charmed all listeners by his witty vivacities.

On the 26th of June 1796, he writes thus of his fortunes

and condition to his friend Clarke, "Still, still the victim of affliction; were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend. Whether I shall ever get about again is only known to HIM, the Great Unknown, whose creature I am. Alas, Clarke, I begin to fear the worst! As to my individual self I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not: but Burns's poor widow and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones, helpless orphans! *Here* I am as weak as a woman's tear. Enough of this! 'tis half my disease. I duly received your last, enclosing the note; it came extremely in time, and I am much obliged to your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as by return of post to enclose me *another* note: I trust you can do so without inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me. If I must go, I leave a few friends behind me, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance. O, dear, dear Clarke! that I shall ever see you again is I am afraid highly improbable." This remarkable letter proves both the declining health, and the poverty of the poet: his digestion was so bad that he could taste neither flesh nor fish: porridge and milk he could alone swallow, and that but in small quantities. When it is recollected that he had no more than thirty shillings a week to keep house, and live like a gentleman, no one need wonder that his wife had to be obliged to a generous neighbor for some of the chief necessities for her coming confinement, and that the poet had to beg, in extreme need, two guinea notes from a distant friend.

His sinking state was not unobserved by his friends, and Syme and M'Murdo united with Dr. Maxwell in persuading him, at the beginning of the summer, to seek

health at the Brow-well, a few miles east from Dumfries, where there were pleasant walks on the Solway-side, and salubrious breezes from the sea, which it was expected would bring the health to the poet they had brought to many. For a while, his looks brightened up, and health seemed inclined to return: his friend, the witty and accomplished Mrs. Riddel, who was herself ailing, paid him a visit. "I was struck," she said, with his appearance on entering the room: the stamp of death was impressed on his features. His first words were, 'Well, Madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest; he looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me so ill, with his usual sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing: we had a long conversation about his present state, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He showed great concern about his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works; he said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him, to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and verses, written with unguarded freedom, would be handed about by vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent malice or envy from pouring forth their venom on his name. I had seldom seen his mind greater, or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies; but the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed willing to indulge." This was on the evening of the 5th of July; another lady who called to see him, found him seated at a window, gazing on the

sun, then setting brightly on the summits of the green hills of Nithsdale. "Look how lovely the sun is," said the poet, "but he will soon have done with shining for me."

He now longed for home: his wife, whom he ever tenderly loved, was about to be confined in child-bed: his papers were in sad confusion, and required arrangement; and he felt that desire to die, at least among familiar things and friendly faces, so common to our nature. He had not long before, though much reduced in pocket, refused with scorn an offer of fifty pounds, which a speculating bookseller made, for leave to publish his looser compositions: he had refused an offer of the like sum yearly, from Perry of the Morning Chronicle, for poetic contributions to his paper, lest it might embroil him with the ruling powers, and he had resented the remittance of five pounds from Thomson, on account of his lyric contributions, and desired him to do so no more, unless he wished to quarrel with him: but his necessities now, and they had at no time been so great, induced him to solicit five pounds from Thomson, and ten pounds from his cousin, James Burness, of Montrose, and to beg his friend Alexander Cunningham to intercede with the Commissioners of Excise, to depart from their usual practice, and grant him his full salary; for without that, he added, "If I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger." Thomson sent the five pounds, James Burness sent the ten, but the Commissioners of Excise refused to be either merciful or generous. Stobie, a young expectant in the customs, was both;—he performed the duties of the dying poet, and refused to touch the salary. The mind of Burns was haunted with the fears of want and the terrors of a jail; nor were those fears without foundation;

one Williamson, to whom he was indebted for the cloth to make his volunteer regimentals, threatened the one ; and a feeling that he was without money for either his own illness or the confinement of his wife, threatened the other.

Burns returned from the Brow-well, on the 18th of July : as he walked from the little carriage which brought him up the Mill hole-brae to his own door, he trembled much, and stooped with weakness and pain, and kept his feet with difficulty ; his looks were woe-worn and ghastly, and no one who saw him, and there were several, expected to see him again in life. It was soon circulated through Dumfries, that Burns had returned worse from the Brow-well ; that Maxwell thought ill of him, and that, in truth, he was dying. The anxiety of all classes was great, differences of opinion were forgotten, in sympathy for his early fate ; wherever two or three were met together their talk was of Burns, of his rare wit, matchless humor, the vivacity of his conversation, and the kindness of his heart. To the poet himself, death, which he now knew was at hand, brought with it no fear ; his good-humor, which small matters alone ruffled, did not forsake him, and his wit was ever ready. He was poor — he gave his pistols, which he had used against the smugglers on the Solway, to his physician, adding with a smile, that he had tried them and found them an honor to their maker, which was more than he could say of the bulk of mankind ! He was proud — he remembered the indifferent practice of the corps to which he belonged, and turning to Gibson, one of his fellow-soldiers, who stood at his bed-side with wet eyes, “Johu,” said he, and a gleam of humor passed over his face, “pray don’t let the awkward-squad fire over me.” It was almost the last act

of his life to copy into his Common-place Book, the letters which contained the charge against him of the Commissioners of Excise, and his own eloquent refutation, leaving judgment to be pronounced by the candor of posterity.

It has been injuriously said of Burns, by Coleridge, that the man sunk, but the poet was bright to the last: he did not sink in the sense that these words imply: the man was manly to the latest draught of breath. That he was a poet to the last, can be proved by facts, as well as by the word of the author of *Christabel*. As he lay silently growing weaker and weaker, he observed Jessie Lewars, a modest and beautiful young creature, and sister to one of his brethren of the Excise, watching over him with moist eyes, and tending him with the care of a daughter, he rewarded her with one of those songs which are an insurance against forgetfulness. The lyrics of the north have nothing finer than this exquisite stanza:—

“ Altho’ thou maun never be mine,
Altho’ even hope is denied,
’Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside.”

His thoughts as he lay wandered to Charlotte Hamilton, and he dedicated some beautiful stanzas to her beauty and her coldness, beginning, “Fairest maid on Devon banks.”

It was a sad sight to see the poet gradually sinking; his wife in hourly expectation of her sixth confinement, and his four helpless children—a daughter, a sweet child, had died the year before—with no one of their lineage to soothe them with kind words or minister to their wants. Jessie Lewars, with equal prudence and

attention, watched over them all : she could not help seeing that the thoughts of the desolation which his death would bring pressed sorely on him, for he loved his children, and hoped much from his boys. He wrote to his father-in-law, James Armour, at Mauchline, that he was dying, his wife nigh her confinement, and begged that his mother-in-law would hasten to them and speak comfort. He wrote to Mrs. Dunlop, saying, "I have written to you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me in all probability will speedily send me beyond that bourne whence no traveller returns. Your friendship, with which for many years you honored me, was a friendship dearest to my soul : your conversation and your correspondence were at once highly entertaining and instructive—with what pleasure did I use to break up the seal ! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell !" A tremor pervaded his frame ; his tongue grew parched, and he was at times delirious : on the fourth day after his return, when his attendant James Maclure, held his medicine to his lips, he swallowed it eagerly, rose almost wholly up, spread out his hands, sprang forward nigh the whole length of the bed, fell on his face, and expired. He died on the 21st of July, when nearly thirty-seven years and seven months old.

The burial of Burns, on the 25th of July, was an impressive and mournful scene : half the people of Nithsdale and the neighboring parts of Galloway had crowded into Dumfries, to see their poet "mingled with the earth," and not a few had been permitted to look at his body, laid out for interment. It was a calm and beautiful day,

and as the body was borne along the street towards the old kirk-yard, by his brethren of the volunteers, not a sound was heard but the measured step and the solemn music: there was no impatient crushing, no fierce elbowing—the crowd which filled the street seemed conscious what they were now losing forever. Even while this pageant was passing, the widow of the poet was taken in labor; but the infant born in that unhappy hour soon shared his father's grave. On reaching the northern nook of the kirk-yard, where the grave was made, the mourners halted; the coffin was divested of the mort-cloth, and silently lowered to its resting-place, and as the first shovel-full of earth fell on the lid, the volunteers, too agitated to be steady, justified the fears of the poet, by three ragged volleys. He who now writes this very brief and imperfect account was present: he thought then, as he thinks now, that all the military array of foot and horse did not harmonize with either the genius or the fortunes of the poet, and that the tears which he saw on many cheeks around, as the earth was replaced, were worth all the splendor of a show which mocked with unintended mockery the burial of the poor and neglected Burns. The body of the poet was, on the 5th of June, 1815, removed to a more commodious spot in the same burial-ground—his dark, waving locks looked then fresh and glossy—to afford room for a marble monument, which embodies, with neither skill nor grace, that well-known passage in the dedication to the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt: “The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard, Elijah, did Elisha, at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me.” The dust of the bard was again disturbed, when the body of Mrs. Burns was laid, in April, 1834, beside the remains of her husband: his skull was dug up by the district

craniologists, to satisfy their minds by measurement that he was equal to the composition of "Tam o' Shanter," or "Mary in Heaven." This done, they placed the skull in a leaden box, "carefully lined with the softest materials," and returned it, we hope for ever, to the hallowed ground.

+ Thus lived and died Robert Burns, the chief of Scottish poets : in his person he was tall and sinewy, and of such strength and activity, that Scott alone, of all the poets I have seen, seemed his equal : his forehead was broad, his hair black, with an inclination to curl, his visage uncommonly swarthy, his eyes large, dark, and lustrous, and his voice deep and manly. His sensibility was strong, his passions full to overflowing, and he loved, nay, adored, whatever was gentle and beautiful. He had, when a lad at the plough, an eloquent word and an inspired song for every fair face that smiled on him, and a sharp sarcasm or a fierce lampoon for every rustic who thwarted or contradicted him. As his first inspiration came from love, he continued through life to love on, and was as ready with the lasting incense of the muse for the ladies of Nithsdale as for the lasses of Kyle : his earliest song was in praise of a young girl who reaped by his side, when he was seventeen—his latest in honor of a lady by whose side he had wandered and dreamed on the banks of the Devon. He was of a nature proud and suspicious, and towards the close of his life seemed disposed to regard all above him in rank as men who unworthily possessed the patrimony of genius ; he desired to see the order of nature restored, and worth and talent in precedence of the base or the dull. He had no medium in his hatred or his love : he never spared the stupid, as if they were not to be endured because he was bright ; and on the heads of the innocent possessors of titles or wealth he was ever ready

to shower his lampoons. He loved to start doubts in religion which he knew inspiration only could solve, and he spoke of Calvinism with a latitude of language that grieved pious listeners. He was warm-hearted and generous to a degree, above all men, and scorned all that was selfish and mean with a scorn quite romantic. He was a steadfast friend and a good neighbor: while he lived at Ellisland few passed his door without being entertained at his table; and even when in poverty, on the Millhole-brae, the poor seldom left his door but with blessings on their lips.

Of his modes of study he has himself informed us, as well as of the seasons and places in which he loved to muse. He composed while he strolled along the secluded banks of the Doon, the Ayr, or the Nith; as the images crowded on his fancy his pace became quickened, and in his highest moods he was excited even to tears. He loved the winter for its leafless trees, its swelling floods, and its winds which swept along the gloomy sky, with frost and snow on their wings; but he loved the autumn more—he has neglected to say why—the muse was then more liberal of her favors, and he composed with a happy alacrity unfelt in all other seasons. He filled his mind and heart with the materials of song—and retired from gazing on woman's beauty, and from the excitement of her charms, to record his impressions in verse, as a painter delineates on his canvas the looks of those who sit to his pencil. His chief place of study at Ellisland is still remembered: it extends along the river-bank, towards the Isle: there the neighboring gentry love to walk and peasants to gather, and hold it sacred, as the place where he composed *Tam o' Shanter*. His favorite place of study, when residing in Dumfries, was the ruins of Lincluden

College, made classic by that sublime ode, "The Vision," and that level and clovery sward contiguous to the College, on the northern side of the Nith: the latter place was his favorite resort; it is known now by the name of Burns's musing ground, and there he conceived many of his latter lyrics. In case of interruption he completed the verses at the fireside, where he swung to and fro in his arm-chair till the task was done: he then submitted the song to the ordeal of his wife's voice, which was both sweet and clear, and while she sung he listened attentively, and altered or amended till the whole was in harmony, music and words.

The genius of Burns is of a high order: in brightness of expression and unsolicited ease and natural vehemence of language, he stands in the first rank of poets: in choice of subjects, in happiness of conception, and loftiness of imagination, he recedes into the second. He owes little of his fame to his subjects, for, saving the beauty of a few ladies, they were all of an ordinary kind: he sought neither in romance nor in history for themes to the muse; he took up topics from life around which were familiar to all, and endowed them with character, with passion, with tenderness, with humor—elevating all that he touched into the regions of poetry and morals. He went to no far lands for the purpose of surprising us with wonders, neither did he go to crowns or coronets to attract the stare of the peasantry around him, by things which to them were as a book shut and sealed: "The Daisy" grew on the lands which he ploughed; "The Mouse" built her frail nest on his own stubble-field; "The Haggis" reeked on his own table; "The Scotch Drink" of which he sang was the produce of a neighboring still; "The Twa Dogs," which conversed so wisely and wittily, were, one

of them at least, his own collies ; “ The Vision ” is but a picture, and a brilliant one, of his own hopes and fears ; “ Tam Samson ” was a friend whom he loved ; “ Doctor Hornbook ” a neighboring pedant ; “ Matthew Henderson ” a social captain on half-pay ; “ The Scotch Bard ” who had gone to the West Indies was Burns himself ; the heroine of “ The Lament ” was Jean Armour ; and “ Tam o’ Shanter ” a facetious farmer of Kyle, who rode late and loved pleasant company, nay, even “ The Deil ” himself, whom he had the hardihood to address, was a being whose eldrich croon had alarmed the devout matrons of Kyle, and had wandered, not unseen by the bard himself, among the lonely glens of the Doon. Burns was one of the first to teach the world that high moral poetry resided in the humblest subjects : whatever he touched became elevated ; his spirit possessed and inspired the commonest topics, and endowed them with life and beauty.

His songs have all the beauties and but few of them the faults of his poems : they flow to the music as readily as if both air and words came into the world together. The sentiments are from nature, they are rarely strained or forced, and the words dance in their places and echo the music in its pastoral sweetness, social glee, or in the tender and the moving. He seems always to write with woman’s eye upon him : he is gentle, persuasive and impassioned : he appears to watch her looks, and pours out his praise or his complaint according to the changeful moods of her mind. He looks on her, too, with a sculptor’s as well as a poet’s eye : to him who works in marble, the diamonds, emeralds, pearls, and elaborate ornaments of gold, but load and injure the harmony of proportion, the grace of form, and divinity of sentiment of his nymph or his goddess—so with Burns the fashion of a lady’s

bodice, the lustre of her satins, or the sparkle of her diamonds, or other finery with which wealth or taste has loaded her, are neglected as idle frippery; while her beauty, her form, or her mind, matters which are of nature, and not of fashion, are remembered and praised. He is none of the millinery bards, who deal in scented silks, spider-net laces, rare gems, set in rarer workmanship, and who shower diamonds and pearls by the bushel on a lady's locks: he makes bright eyes, flushing cheeks, the magic of the tongue, and the "pulses' maddening play" perform all. His songs are, in general, pastoral pictures: he seldom finishes a portrait of female beauty without enclosing it in a natural frame-work of waving woods, running streams, the melody of birds, and the lights of heaven. Those who desire to feel Burns in all his force, must seek some summer glen, when a country girl searches among his many songs for one which sympathizes with her own heart, and gives it full utterance, till wood and vale is filled with the melody. It is remarkable that the most naturally elegant and truly impassioned songs in our literature were written by a ploughman in honor of the rustic lasses around him.

His poetry is all life and energy, and bears the impress of a warm heart and a clear understanding; it abounds with passions and opinions—vivid pictures of rural happiness and the raptures of successful love, all fresh from nature and observation, and not as they are seen through the spectacles of books. The wit of the clouted shoe is there without its coarseness: there is a prodigality of humor without licentiousness, a pathos ever natural and manly, a social joy akin sometimes to sadness, a melancholy not unallied to mirth, and a sublime morality which seeks to elevate and soothe. To a love of man he added

an affection for the flowers of the valley, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field: he perceived the tie of social sympathy which united animated with unanimated nature, and in many of his finest poems most beautifully he has enforced it. His thoughts are original and his style new and unborrowed: all that he has written is distinguished by a happy carelessness, a bounding elasticity of spirit, and a singular felicity of expression, simple yet inimitable; he is familiar, yet dignified, careless, yet correct, and concise, yet clear and full. All this and much more is embodied in the language of humble life—a dialect reckoned barbarous by scholars, but which, coming from the lips of inspiration, becomes classic and elevated.

The prose of this great poet has much of the original merit of his verse, but it is seldom so natural and so sustained: it abounds with fine outflashings and with a genial warmth and vigor, but it is defaced by false ornament and by a constant anxiety to say fine and forcible things. He seems not to know that simplicity was as rare and as needful a beauty in prose as in verse; he covets the pauses of Sterne and the point and antithesis of Junius, like one who believes that to write prose well he must be ever lively, ever pointed, and ever smart. Yet the account which he wrote of himself to Dr. Moore is one of the most spirited and natural narratives in the language, and composed in a style remote from the strained and groped-for witticisms and put-on sensibilities of many of his letters:—“Simple,” as John Wilson says, “we may well call it; rich in fancy, overflowing in feeling, and dashed off in every other paragraph with the easy boldness of a great master.”

THE LAND OF BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS.

“ Now comes the sax-and-twentieth simmer,
I’ve seen the bud upon the timmer.”

THE looks of Burns still live in many men’s memories; but as all such recollections perish, we shall soon have nought to trust to but the descriptions of biographers and the picturings of artists. The truest and best of these are of course from the hands of men who had seen the poet, and were familiar with his ways. “His motions,” says Professor Walker, who saw him when he first appeared amongst the wits and bloods of Edinburgh, “were firm and decided, and though without any pretensions to grace, were at the same time so free from clownish constraint, as to show that he had not always been confined to the society of his profession. His countenance was manly and intelligent, and marked by a thoughtful gravity, which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided—it was full of mind.” A much higher authority speaks of Burns in almost similar words: “I was,” says Sir Walter Scott, “a lad of fifteen, in 1786–7, when he

came first to Edinburgh: I would have given the world to know him; as it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation; among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scottish school: there was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed — I say, literally glowed — when he spoke with feeling or interest: I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time."

These two correct and striking pen-and-ink portraits of Burns are supported and illustrated by the likenesses made by the pencil. The earliest and truest, and best of these, in all respects, is that one painted for the poet by the now venerable Nasmyth, and for which he had the sittings when Burns was, as our motto intimates, in something more than his six-and-twentieth summer. Though it has less of the bard in his inspired moods than those who knew him would wish, yet it has more of him than any other likeness has preserved — less massive and manly, but with much of the outward air of the man about it. It is most deficient in that brightness of look — that lightning-gleam of eye, of which he had more than any other son of song living within man's memory.

Beugo, when he engraved the head for the first Edinburgh edition of his poems, professed to restore all that Nasmyth missed, and caused Burns to sit whilst he touched up the plate from his face. All that the likeness gained by this was an increased swarthiness of hue; but it lost the little which it had of the intellectual glow of the picture:—it is Burns—but Burns accursed and fallen off, like Milton's angel, from his original brightness. The same portrait, lately engraved by Walker, has all that Nasmyth has preserved for us of Burns. The next best resemblance is the profile traced, the size of life, in 1787, by Miers. I compared it with the cast of his skull, and with the portrait painted by Taylor: the skull established the accuracy of the profile, but both are at variance with the proportions of the painting, which, in spite of much excellent testimony in its favor, I regard as too inaccurate to be otherwise than spurious.

Burns, as I write, seems to stand before me—such as he was when, escaping from the courtly circles of Edinburgh, he came to try his fortune between the stilts of the plough on the banks of Nith. He was tall, sinewy, and vigorous, well placed on his limbs, formed for feats of activity and strength; and the swarthiest of all Scotchmen I ever saw. In his ordinary moods he walked with a slight stoop; his brow was then dark, his eye dull, and it seemed as if the spirit of God had gone out of him, and left but a lump of clay. On the coming of the muse, or the appearance of a friend, he became at once another man; the ploughman-lout vanished, sunshine returned to his brow, a smile of winning sweetness to his lip, and the light almost insufferable, which Scott has described, to his eyes; and he looked like a new-created thing, all brightness and joy. The expression of his face was as varied

as his genius: there the mean or the high-souled found lowliness or loftiness in the spirit of their own natures, and spoke of the poet accordingly. Byron sneeringly said, Burns had as much dirt as deity about him; yet, for all his proud birth and high fortune, the peer and the peasant seem of imagination all compact, — with this difference; the latter refused, when half-starving, the sum of fifty pounds for his indecorous songs; while the former, in affluence, wrote and published his *Don Juan* to show that he held virtue to be an accident, and vice a certainty.

“ O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us ! ”

BIRTH-PLACE OF BURNS.

“ Robin Burns was born in Kyle.”

BURNS, RAMSAY, and HOGG, the three chiefs of the rustic or natural school of Scottish song, were born in what may be truly called pastoral districts of the Lowlands, and at no great way from each other. Robert was born on the Doon, at the distance of some five-and-twenty miles, as the crow flies, from the birth-place of Allan on the Glengonar; while the cradle of James was rocked on the Ettrick, some five-and-twenty miles away from that of the author of the Gentle Shepherd, and in a land as wild as it is romantic. They were the sons of humble men, for Ramsay, with the blood of Dalhousie in his veins, was of a race of miners; they were born too in very humble houses, and each on the bank of a stream, before their day little known in song, but which they lived to render immortal. Their strains too, — varied in their colors as the rainbow, — were all of their native land; and though they were poets of very different orders, all they wrote and all they did was as effectually emblazoned with the character of Scotland, as her banner is with her warning motto and her armed and blossomed thistle. They were three joyous good fellows, too, warm-hearted and social.

The cottage in which Burns, — the greatest of the three, — was born, was raised by the hands of his father on Doonside, nigh to the town of Ayr, and close to the

old kirk of Alloway, It would seem to have been but a frail structure : a few days after his birth a rough wind shook part of the gable and roof to the ground, and the swaddled poet was carried to the shelter of a neighboring cottage. He loved, it is said, to allude to this when he grew up, and gayly claim commiseration for the stormy passions of one to whom a tempest had acted as hand-maid. In other days, a mason was seldom called in, and an architect never, to the construction of our northern shealings : the peasant marked out the ground-floor, near a stream, and in the shelter of wood or hill, of his projected dwelling place : the wood-work, nearly as rough as when felled in the forest, was first framed and erected ; around the legs of the couples, or principal timbers of the roof, which generally stood on the ground, the rustic artist reared his walls of clay, straw, and stone ; shaped out his windows and his door, made his fire-side roomy, and then covered the whole in with turf and broom. The abode had a rough comfort about it, which atoned for want of elegance ; and with a well managed kale-yard behind the house, a spring-well probably nigh the door, and meal in the chest, and some books on the shelves, the “ inventor and maker ” of the shealing set up his staff, and with the wife of his bosom, commenced housekeeping. There is little either poetic or heroic in this, yet poets of a high order, and heroes of the truest stamp, have sprung from such hovels.

The more classic poets of the land, Scott and Thomson and others, are chiefly from the eastern or Edinburgh side of the isle : while those of the rustic school, Burns and Ramsay and their followers, are from the western or Galloway side. In the latter district, comprehending once four or five counties, and ruled by princes of its own,

the influence of classic lore prevailed less perhaps than in the other, which included the chief seat of government; and its poets, thrown more into the bosom of nature, — or in other words, on their own resources, — sought at hand, and found, all the materials of song which their more eastern brethren found, too readily sometimes, in the pages of Greece and Rome. Thus in Ramsay we see no traces of foreign imitation; his Gentle Shepherd, the only true pastoral of the island, is copied, language, scene, and sentiment, from his native glens: Burns went at once and drank at the fountain-head, and obeying only the voice of nature, sang with a freedom, a manliness, and a grace, equal to the palmiest times of the muse: while Hogg, yielding to the wild and supernatural impulses of his fine imagination, sang a most romantic and wayward strain, but in which there is nothing, — not even a line, — of the romance of other lands; all is of the Ettrick and the Yarrow — natural and national.

The birth-place of Burns, like the dwelling-places of other bards, has had its revolutions. The houses in which Milton lived are cast down; the home of Shakspeare has become a butcher's shop; through part of the abode of Cowley the members of a turnpike trust have driven a road; in the grove of Pope, the nightingale of Twickenham, birds, but not of song, roost and abide; while in the cottage of Burns an alehouse keeper bottles off his barrels, and makes an honest penny of passers by, who halt to look at the place whence the great light of Scottish song came. All around are to be seen places made sacred by his muse: every hill has its fame; every stream its praise; every wood its immortality; nor has the poet failed to consecrate in verse the rude structure which has

been described. In the words uttered by the midwife in the hour of his birth, he indicates the fame which awaits him.

“He’ll be a credit to us a’,
We’ll a’ be proud of Robin.”

A random sentiment of his own—but now the fixed opinion of mankind.

TAM O' SHANTER.

"So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldrich screech and hollow."

THE scene of this most vivid and varied of all poems is on the banks of the Doon, and the story is embellished from tradition by the genius of the poet. It has, so far, a foundation in truth : but men without fancy have striven to find for every image and incident a real and substantial origin, as if all the bright threads of the magic web of the story were spun from a veritable distaff, and the characters and incidents which compose it had come, like sitters to a portrait painter, to have their likenesses transferred to the poet's canvas. A cupful of truth will color an ocean of fiction : Burns only emblazoned his tale with a few localities, to give it the air of the district, and never imagined that he was writing a story—

"Whose accuracy all men durst swear for."

Yet I have met with men, and critical ones, who averred that they had tippled with the real and original Tam o' Shanter, in the company of the miller and the smith ; had heard the souter tell his queerest stories, when the landlord laughed and the landlady was condescending : and more than that, assert, that this poem, written on the banks of Nith, was conceived on those of Doon ; and that they knew the scenes where the characters of the drama dwelt ; and were intimate with Nanny, who wore the

sark of Paisley harn, and had heard more of her spells than Burns had related. Those men no doubt believed what they asserted; but they were ignorant of the ways of the muse; they were unacquainted with her secrets of composition; and as fancy was unknown to them, they supposed that Burns, like a portrait painter, could not paint truly without individual models. Well may we exclaim, with the poet of another isle —

“What an impostor genius is!”

The very scene which the poet's fancy has so strangely peopled, is seen through the poetic medium of a thunder-storm, and by a man excited by superstition and liquor. All that gives air and force to the tale is matter of imagination.

Of the realities embellished by the muse, something, however, may be said. I allude not to the Howff in the town of Ayr, where Tam merrily prepared himself for the road; nor to Doon, with all her floods spanned by a solitary arch; but I mean the storm of rain and fire through which he galloped, and the images of fear and terror which in quick succession prepared him for the blazing kirk and its infernal inmates. “I seem to gain, in buffeting with the wind,” says Sir Walter Scott, in his inimitable Diary for 1825, “a little of the high spirit with which in younger days I used to enjoy a Tam o' Shanter ride through darkness, wind, and rain, the boughs groaning and cracking over my head, the good horse free to the road and impatient for home, and feeling the weather as little as I did.

‘The storm around might rair and rustle,
We didna mind the storm a whistle.’”

If the intrepid poet of Marmion had taken a midnight gallop over the suspicious way where the stout farmer of Kyle rode, he might have thought less of the fire and the storm, than of the place where the pedlar perished in the snow ; the stone which broke the neck of tippling Charlie ; the cairn where hunters found the murdered child, and the haunted bush on which the mother of poor Mungo hanged herself. All these touching circumstances are, it is said, matters of tradition or of certainty ; and had they not existed, the poet would have supplied their place with something of the like spirit to stimulate Tam, and prepare us for the infernal jubilee.

Of Tam o' Shanter there are few copies existing in the handwriting of Burns : the only one which contains variations is in the library of Abbotsford. A relic so sacred was duly esteemed by its great possessor : he loved to show it to literary visitors, and point out two additional lines which distinguished his copy from all others. I shall put them into their place : they will be easily discovered among their companions, for few who read one can fail to have the poem by heart.

“ Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure.
The cricket raised its cheering cry,
The kittlen chased its tail in joy.
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.”

A poem which Campbell, Wordsworth, and Scott have praised, and on which Cooper has employed his pencil, requires no further commendation. It was written on Nithside, as a bribe to induce Grose to admit Alloway

kirk among his antiquities of Scotland; he composed it in one happy stroll, during a twilight interview with the muse, and in such an ecstasy, that the tears were running down his cheeks. It bears all the marks of an impassioned fit, and is the best and most finished of all his larger poems.

THE BRIGS OF AYR.

“Auld Brig appear’d of ancient Pictish race,
The very wrinkles Gothic in his face.”

THE water of Ayr, over which these two Brigs afford a passage to and from the town, is renowned alike in history and tradition; and now since the poetry and the birth of Burns have bestowed their halo, it is become as celebrated as some rivers whose waters are treble its amount. The clear stream itself; the uplands from which it descends; the glens down which it hurries; the level lands over which it glides to the sea, and the villages and cottages which thrive on its banks,—are all matters for the muse: and Burns, sometimes with a gay, and now and then with a solemn hand, has recorded them all. Nor has he forgotten the tributary rills and streams which swell the Ayr, till it is of a size to admit ships —

“When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar’s mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source.”

Many vicissitudes have happened to the land since “The two Maiden Sisters” erected the Auld Brig, during the days of Alexander the Third. Scotland, lost by the folly of Baliol, was won back by the bravery of Wallace; and, reconquered on the lamentable death of that hero, was restored to independence by one equally heroic and

more fortunate. It is a rough structure of several arches, strong yet, and likely to endure : the statues of the Virgin Founders are still pointed out by the district antiquaries on the eastern parapet, but time and a stormy climate have been dealing with them : the bridge is high, narrow, and inconvenient, and, relieved by the new bridge from carts and coaches, is wholly set aside for foot passengers. The New Brig, which, from this kindly interposition, the old one ought to have regarded as a friend, stands some hundred yards or so further down the river, and is handsome and useful. The quarrel between them, as recorded by the poet, was on architectural rather than personal grounds, and may be regarded as a rustic interpretation of the great controversy between Gothic and Roman architecture.

The Auld Brig was erected in other than a Roman taste, and sprang, like our abbeys and cathedrals, from the Gothic : the New Brig, built after the design of the Adams's, has, like all which came from their hand, the stamp of their uncle, Athenian Stuart, upon it. No wonder, therefore, that the Spirit which presided over the old should treat with anger and scorn the Spirit which presided over the new. She saw a strange and more polished structure arise, embellished with columns and capitals, and resented the intrusion, as her old hero Wallace would an invasion of the Southron. The scorn was answered with scorn ; the Spirit of the new looked with compassion and contempt on the mouldering images and time-flawed arches of the old structure, and the rising indignation soon found speech. The poet has conducted the controversy with indifferent skill : the classic Spirit characterizes with some force the architecture of which her rival has the charge ; while the Gothic Spirit seeks for defence in the beauty, and

the wisdom, and the devotion which for six centuries had walked over it, Sharply does the New Brig Spirit say—

“Fine architecture, trouth I needs must say’t o’t !
 The Lord be thanket that we’ve tint the gate o’t !
 Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,
 Hanging with threat’ning jutlike precipices ;
 O’er-arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
 Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves ;
 Windows and doors in nameless sculpture drest,
 With order, symmetry, or taste unblest,
 Forms like some bedlam statuary’s dream,
 The crazed creations of misguided whim.”

Instead of defending her architecture on the picturesque beauty of its combinations, or its lofty elegance, dim devotional splendor, and the harmony and geometrical unity of its various parts, the Spirit of the Old Brig exclaims—

“Ye dainty deacons, and ye douce conveners,
 To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners ;
 Ye godly councils wha hae blest this town,
 Ye godly brethren of the sacred gown,
 How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,
 To see each melancholy alteration !
 Nae langer reverend men, their country’s glory,
 In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story ;
 Nae longer thrifty citizens and douce,
 Meet o’er a pint or in the Council House.”

The Genius of the Stream puts an end to a controversy, in which the strong is vanquished by the weak ; and the poem concludes with a high strain of compliment to the Poet’s patrons, the Stewarts and the Ballantynes.

THE HOLY FAIR.

“My name is Fun, your crony dear,
The nearest friend ye hae ;
And this is Superstition here,
And that's Hypocrisy.”

THE scene of this lampoon lies in the kirk-yard of Mauchline, in Ayrshire ; and the introductory interview between the poet and his inspirer Fun, took place on the way which leads to that village from Mossgiel. The poem, a sharp one, did some service, though perhaps unintentional, to the kirk of Scotland : the sacrament was in those days dispensed in the open air, and the license in which the laxer members of the community indulged, gave it much the appearance of a festival or fair. When the more unsettled portion of the hearers imagined that the discourse of the preacher was mysterious or dry, they would adjourn to the change-house, and drink and discuss spiritual things in no very decorous language ; while others, like the Kilmarnock lads of the poet's satire, would roam about the skirts of the congregation, making comments aloud, and “winking on the lasses.” All this, and much more, the satire of Burns abated in a moment. Congregations are now more polite, if not more pious, and the idle and profligate seek other scenes on which to exhibit their folly.

The “Holy Fair” seems to have been suggested by the “Leith Races” of Ferguson, to which the opening has too close a resemblance to be accidental. The elder

bard, in a morning stroll on Edinburgh street, meets with mistress Mirth; the season of the year, as well as the lady's looks, is introduced.

“ In July month, ae boónie morn,
 When Nature's rokelay green
 Was spread o'er ilka rig of corn,
 To charm our roving een;
 Glowrin about I saw a quean,
 The fairest 'neath the lift,
 Her een were o' the sillar sheen,
 Her skin like snawy drift.”

This aerial figurante upbraids Ferguson for idling in the street, when Leith Races offered his satiric muse such fine instances of fun and folly. Who this lady might be the poet says he wondered: she told him at once —

“ I dwell amang the cauler springs
 That weet the Land o' Cakes,
 And aften tune my cantie strings
 At bridals and late wakes:
 They ca' me Mirth, I ne'er was ken'd
 To grumble or look sour;
 But blythe wad be a lift to lend
 Gif ye wad sey my power.”

The Fun of Burns goes farther than the Mirth of Ferguson: not content with desiring him to accompany her to the “ holy spot,” she maliciously points out the sisters twin, Superstition and Hypocrisy, as fair objects for ridicule and satire. The poet hastens to the scene, but discontinues the allegory; those airy creations subside into the sober flesh-and-blood realities of life, and he finds the incidents of his poem, without their aid, among the sons and daughters of men.

The picture is wholly satiric, and is more vivid than just : for the poet might have found something grave and devout, as in the "Cotter's Saturday Night," in contemplating a scene which is at once solemn and sublime. But he regarded it merely as a subject suitable for mirth, and for those personal sallies so frequent in his poem of the "Ordination," and which the bitter "New Light" controversy had taught him. He refrained from giving the names of the characters at length in the Edinburgh as well as the Kilmarnock edition of his poems ; but in most of the copies presented to his friends, the blanks are filled up by his own hand — the chief priests of the old and adverse light are held up to derision. The kirk of Scotland has still preachers whose sermons, like those of Russell, incline too much to fire and brimstone ; and hearers who become too readily "yill-caup-commentators."

The lands of Mossgiel, where Burns held this imaginary interview, have become for these many years a sort of pilgrim ground to strangers. Those, and they are many, who visit the land of the poet, love to sit in the little chamber where he wrote the "Cotter's Saturday Night," or survey the fields where he composed the "Daisy" or the "Mouse," and held his colloquy with Madam Fun. Wordsworth told me that on his late journey through Ayrshire, he regarded those fields with reverence ; and as he looked on them, conceived that fine sonnet, in which he has expressed his admiration of the great Peasant Poet of Scotland.

JAMES GLENCAIRN BURNS.

“The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me.”

THE first time I saw James Glencairn Burns, the poet's third son, was a day or so after the funeral of his father, when, accompanied by his brothers Robert and William, he was on his way up the streets of Dumfries to the Town School. The black dresses, the lawn weepers on their jacket cuffs, their extreme youth, and the desolate look of the poor orphans, made an impression too deep to be effaced. The next time I saw him, was in my own house, in London, when he called accompanied by the Ettrick Shepherd. Many years, and most of them stirring ones, had intervened; James had served, not unnoticed, in India, and returned to see his mother and friends with the rank of captain. The East seemed to have made little impression upon either constitution or looks: I had heard this before, through Sir John Malcolm, who loved him because he was a worthy officer, as well as the son of a great poet, and had, during his command in India, shown that he desired to honor him. I found him pleasing and unaffected: with his father's love of song, and his mother's skill in singing, and with a touch more of the latter than of the former—for I knew them both—in his looks. He told me he had been at Abbotsford, where Sir Walter Scott treated him with uncommon kindness, and asked him to

sing one of his father's songs ; he sung " Of a' airts the win' can blaw," which made the eyes of his illustrious entertainer moist. Neither did the "boy of Burns" leave those halls—so soon to become silent and dark—without his meed of song from no undistinguished minstrel.

Captain Burns was named James Glencairn, for James Cunningham, the last Earl but one who bore that title—the wisest as he was the worthiest patron of the poet, and whose virtues are recorded in a Lament not destined to become extinct like the line of its hero. When he began to grow up, Sir James Shaw—who should be praised as often as named, for this and other noble acts—placed him in the school of Christ's Hospital, where Lamb and Coleridge got their learning. There he was well grounded in knowledge, and distinguished himself, but lost the sight of his left eye :—when some sixteen years old or so, he obtained a commission in the army of India—a fine outlet for many high spirits, who are unable from want of influence to obtain that poor boon—leave to toil at home. In the East, wherever he went he found his father's fame before him. The son of Burns was welcomed by all, and by none more than the Marquess of Hastings, whose lady was of the North, and allied too to names of whom the young soldier's father had sung with his usual tenderness. His rise in the army depended on events over which his noble patron had no control ; but having distinguished himself in the Calcutta College, he was entrusted with the discharge of some lucrative duties ; and the first person he thought of in this gleam of prosperity, was his mother. He wrote to Lord Panmure, who had settled an annual fifty pounds on the family, expressing his gratitude, but begging that the pension might be withdrawn ; and to his mother he wrote also, telling her what he had done, and

making it £150. It would be unjust not to say that the exemplary prudence of his mother preserved the family from distress, such as it was suffering at the death of his father : and that his maternal uncle, Robert Armour, watched — and still watches — anxiously over the varying fortunes of all the family.

Captain Burns, after staying some years here, and experiencing much kindness from all classes, returned to India, but not to resume those situations which had enabled him to spread abundance around his paternal fireside. Other rulers held the reins in the empire of the East. Sir Walter Scott told me that he had written to high quarters in his behalf, but those to whom he applied seem not to have had the power ; and the poet's son was neglected : — he was neglected, but not forgotten — brighter and better days were at hand — not those of Lord William Bentinck, to whom it is likely that the name of Burns was new — but those of Lord Auckland, who, in his administration of the East, has called to his aid talent of all kinds, and restored hope and confidence both in Hindostan and at home. Captain Burns, who returned to Bengal in doubt, was soon relieved from his fears : an appointment of profit and honor awaited him, and I hear he will soon come back and settle with his wife — a most worthy lady — in his native soil, and it is to be hoped in the Land of Burns. Of his elder brothers, Robert resides in the house where his father died in Dumfries, and enjoys a small retiring pension from the stamp office, and William is a major in the Indian service at Madras.

HIGHLAND MARY.

“ For dear to me as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.”

It is the privilege of genius to confer immortality on things mortal, and give to beauty a fame which can die only with the language in which that fame is bestowed. All the true songs of our nation have been written from the heart, and addressed not to creatures of fancy, but to beings of flesh and blood—warm and real. This is known to the world, who have shown at all times a lively curiosity to learn the history of those who have given life to poetry, and to whose charms we are indebted for the finest productions of the muse. Who would be unwilling to hear the story of the Rosalind of Spenser, the Sacharissa of Waller, or the Highland Mary of Robert Burns ?

Mary Campbell, for such is the name of the most famous of the heroines of northern song, was a mariner's daughter, a native of Ardrossan, in Ayrshire ; and lived, when she won the heart of the poet, in the humble situation of Dairy-maid in the “ Castle of Montgomery.” All who have written of her, have spoken of her beauty, the swarm of admirers which her loveliness brought, and the warmth yet innocence of her affection for the poet of her native hills. A single song is all that the prolific muse of Burns addressed to her before “ hungry ruin had him in the wind ;” and he was about to quit the banks of the Ayr,

of the Irvine, and of the Doon, for the burning shores of the West Indies. It was then that he addressed to her the farewell song :—

“ Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore ?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar ?”

And it would seem that she had accepted the poet as her husband, and was preparing to depart for the land of the lime and the orange, when the hand of death was upon her. But all this has been told by the poet himself. “ After a pretty long trial,” says Burns, “ of the most ardent reciprocal affection, we met, by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could even learn of her illness.” The poet has pictured those touching moments in verse.

“ How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom !
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie ;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.”

Another hand has added to the picture. “ This adieu was performed,” says Cromeek, “ in a striking and moving

way; the lovers stood on each side of a small brook, they laid their hands in the stream, and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted never to meet again." The spot where this farewell took place is still pointed out.

The Bible on which they plighted their faith was long in the possession of the sister of Mary Campbell. On the first volume is written by the hand of Burns: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord.—*Leviticus*, chap. xix. ver. 12." On the second volume, the same hand has written: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.—*St. Matthew*, chap. v. ver. 33." And on the blank leaves of both volumes is impressed his mark as a mason, and also signed below, "Robert Burns, Mossgiel."

Burns's affection for the early object of his love died only with him. More than three years after the death of Mary Campbell, "whose bosom," to use his own language, "was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love," he wrote one of the most exquisite of his poems—the address "To Mary in Heaven." Sweetly and well has Campbell sung in his Ode to the Memory of Burns:—

"Who that has melted o'er his lay,
To Mary's soul in Heaven above,
But pictur'd sees, in fancy strong,
The landscape and the live-long day,
That smil'd upon their mutual love?
Who that has felt, forgets the song?"

The nephew of Highland Mary, by name William Anderson, is the present possessor of the Bible of Burns, which, with a tress of her hair, very long, and very light and shining, he preserves and values.

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK.

“Ye ken Jock Hornbook i’ the clachan
Deil mak his king’s-hood in a spleuchan.”

THE popular and happy satire of Death and Doctor Hornbook is at once very personal and very poetic. The hero of the tale is of the West of Scotland, and the scene of the strange colloquy lies in the same land. It sometimes happens that men, when they least look for it, attain an eminence from which it is not easy to descend, while it is equally unpleasant to remain. Something of this kind happened to worthy Dominie Wilson — the Doctor Hornbook of the poem. He was schoolmaster of Tarbolton, Burns himself says, in a note accompanying a copy of his poems to Dr. Geddes; and having some scholarcraft and a little vanity, set up as an apothecary, and promised advice to the poor, gratis. Burns, who had no wish to be physicked but by a regular practitioner, resented the presumption of the schoolmaster, and it is said, meeting him in the mason lodge of Tarbolton, sat regarding him — while he descanted on his own knowledge, in language stiffened with pedantry — with flashing eyes which witnessed his scorn and contempt. The poet’s patience failed him at length, and he exclaimed, “Have done, Dr. Hornbook! have done, Dr. Hornbook!” The command was disregarded, and Burns sat brooding, it is supposed, over his future lampoon, till the hour of separation, which happened to be a late one. At those meet-

ings of the brethren, drink mingled largely with the "mystic word and grip;" and Cromek, a curious inquirer, was told on the spot in 1806, that the poet, who "was na fou, but just had plenty," walked slowly homeward, composing the poem as he went. He became weary, and sitting carelessly down to rest and think, fell asleep, but when awoke by the morning sun, he found his seat was the parapet of a bridge. He went home, committed Death and Dr. Hornbook to paper, and went to bed. Such is the tradition; but though tradition too often desires to do wonderful things in as wondrous a way, some of these circumstances were confided next day to his brother Gilbert, when he repeated the poem. "I was holding the plough," he adds, "and Robert was letting the water off the field beside me."

That Burns had written this, the most poetic of his lampoons, was soon known, for he made no secret of his studies; but as he did not print it in the first edition of his poems, it is likely that for a time he reckoned it too personal. This belief, if indeed he ever entertained it, went off in the air of Edinburgh, for it appeared in the second edition of his works. One of his best productions, "The Jolly Beggars;" and one of his worst, "The Holy Tulzie," were excluded while he lived, from print.

The lampoon of Death and Doctor Hornbook was a punishment too severe for the offence. Wilson, a scholar, a good teacher, and a little vain of his acquirements, soon found that Burns had thrust him too much into sunshine; and quitting Tarbolton, removed to Glasgow, where he engaged in commercial pursuits, and forgot, or seemed to forget, that bad eminence on which his brother of the mystic level had placed him. "At Glasgow," says Cromek in 1806, "I heard that the hero of this exquisite satire

was living. Hamilton managed to introduce me to him. We talked of all subjects save the poems of Burns. He is above the middle size; stout made, and inclining to corpulency; his complexion is swarthy, his eye black and expressive: he wears a brown wig, and dresses in black: there is little or nothing of the pedant about him." Mr. Wilson is living, and enjoying the world; but his friends, I hear, share in the dread felt by Cromek, of alluding to the poems of Burns in his presence.

This poem has an admirer in one of our first-rate poets. Wordsworth, who seems to have the poetry of Burns by heart, says, "When the poet wrote his 'Death and Doctor Hornbook,' he had very rarely been intoxicated, or perhaps much exhilarated by liquor; yet how happily does he lead his reader into that track of sensation! and with what lively humor does he describe the disorder of his senses and the confusion of his understanding, put to the test by his deliberate attempt to count the horns of the moon:

' But whether she had three or four,
He could na' tell.'

Behold a sudden apparition, which disperses this disorder, and in a moment chills him into possession of himself. Coming upon no more important mission than the grisly phantom was charged with, what mode of introduction could have been more efficient or appropriate?" No spirit ever came into this world's air more naturally; yet the devil, in the tale of Ramsay, who wore shoes on his hoofs, and a bonnet on his horns, is not half so ludicrous, though painted on purpose.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

“The cheerfu’ supper done, wi’ serious face
They round the ingle form a circle wide ;
The sire turns o’er with patriarchal grace
The big ha’ Bible, ance his father’s pride :
His bonnet reverently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare ;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care ;
And, ‘ Let us worship God,’ he says, with solemn air.”

THE domestic devotion of Scotland has inspired many poems and pictures, but no one has touched the subject with the solemn feeling and serene beauty of Burns. Nor is his strain confined to religion alone : he felt that the sublime act of reading the Gospel and worshipping God in prayer made but a portion of the scene. He has introduced release from toil — a father’s affection — a mother’s care — fire-side happiness — national spirit and true and innocent love — as subordinate matters indeed, but all conducive to devotion. I have often joined in family worship in the cottages of Scotland, and to me it was as impressive as the most fervent prayer or the most eloquent sermon in a public place. To see a venerable man laying his ancestor’s Bible across his knees, and with all his children and servants around him singing a psalm and reading a chapter — while in the former, the softer tones of woman’s voice mingled with the rougher melody of the voice of man ; and in the latter, a light from a rustic candelabra in the middle of the floor showing the

reader's gray hair, and the ancient page soiled by long and frequent use,—formed, with the grave looks of the household, a picture too impressive to be soon forgotten. But this was much increased when, closing the Bible, the master of the house extinguished the lamp, and saying, “Let us pray,” all knelt silently down separately at their individual seats: stooping their foreheads nigh the floor, and uniting in thought with the prayer now poured piously out for their welfare here and hereafter. On these occasions I have sometimes ventured to look up to see the beauty of the scene around: the moon at the window, or the glimmering peat-fire on the floor, helped me to a dim view of the fervent old man, his equally fervent dame, or a daughter or a maid-servant with her face buried in her hands, and her long hair streaming down to the floor.

This, and more than this, was present to the mind of Burns when he composed this noble poem; and equally so to the mind of Wilkie when in his picture he gave to the words of the poet the finest shape and the truest color. Gilbert Burns has recorded the delight which he felt, when in one of their solitary walks Robert first communicated to him “The Cotter’s Saturday Night;” and Mrs. Dunlop often related the influence it exercised over her when laid on a bed of sickness. The poet wrote it in a little chamber or crypt in the farm-house of Mossgiel; and Allan, aware of this when he conceived his picture of Burns writing “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” gave locality to the scene. Another poet, but a far inferior one, has given us the impression which the words “Let us pray” made on his mind.

“‘Now let us pray,’ he said. Knelt every kneec,
And down into the dust stooped every face;
All lights were quench’d, save that which seraphs see

At night, hung o'er the angels' dwelling-place.
All humbly now before the throne of grace
He pour'd his spirit forth, and there was given
Much rapture to him for a little space ; —
Thought flash'd on thought, as bright and fast as levin ;
Something there was of earth, but there was more of heaven."

It sometimes happens that things humorous mingle with things serious : one of these incidents illustrates both the poem and the manners of the land. Into a blacksmith's household, in the vale of Nith, a knowledge, it seems, of the bass in music had failed to penetrate, till his eldest son brought it from a singing-school, and surprised his father when he "took the book," by uniting it to the tenor in the tune of *The Bangor*. The old man at first thought that his son had mistaken the tune, and would take up the right one when he came to the next verse ; but the other struck more boldly into the second verse than he had done into the first ; and his father imagining that he was setting up an opposition tune, could not keep his wrath from rising. The mother, who knew that her husband, a worker in fire, was hot and choleric, interposed, and turning to her son, said, "O Robin, my man, fye, fye ! — taking the word of God out of your poor auld father's mouth in that way !" "Never mind him, Janet, just never mind him," said old Robin, "I'll break his voice till him." So saying, he turned the leaf ; and choosing the hundred and nineteenth psalm, the longest in the book, fairly sung it out and out ; and by the time the sun rose, young Robin's voice was so sobered down, that his mother afterwards, in telling the story, declared that "the scaich of a magpie was music till't."

THE COUNTRY LASSIE.

“In simmer, when the hay was mawn,
And corn wav'd green in ilka field,
While claver blooms white o'er the lea,
And roses blaw in ilka bield:
Blithe Bessie in the milking shiel,
Says —I'll be wed come o't what will;
Out spak a dame in wrinkled eild —
O' guid advisement comes nae ill.”

THE “Country Lassie” is a picture of innocent love, and suspicious wisdom: of young love supported by conscious truth and purity, and of ancient wisdom, sustained by proverb lore, and the experience of ages. The young maiden vindicates faith and love; and without the aid of either levity or wit, achieves a victory over her wily opponent. The dame of wrinkled eld, seems to belong to the household of Mammon: she makes out a good case in favor of what she considers a prudent match, and thinks, with the old adage, “When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window;” and that gold and bonds are superior to health, and strength, and youth: she is full of wise saws and modern instances.

“O, thoughtless lassie, life's a faught!
The canniest gate, the strife is sair:
But ay fu' han't is fetchin best,
A hungry care's an unco care:
But some will spend, and some will spare,
An' wilfu' folk maun hae their will:
Syne as ye brew my maiden fair,
Keep mind that ye maun drink the yill.”

The "Maiden fair" smiles at all this array of rhyming wisdom, and in the sentiments she utters, shows that she has not made her choice without thought and consideration. See how she scatters like chaff the armed ranks which "wrinkled eld" and gray suspicion mustered to make war on true and faithful love.

"O, gear will buy merigs o' land,
And gear will buy me sheep and kye;
But the tender heart o' leesome luv
The gowd and siller canna buy.
We may be poor, my love and I,
Light is the burden luv lays on:
Content and luv bring peace and joy —
What mair hae queens upon a throne?"

This fine song was written on the banks of Nith, at Ellisland, in the summer of 1790; and any one who will stand on the scaur on the south side of the stream, and look on the fine holms of Dalswinton, may enjoy the scene which the poet had before him when he composed it. The sentiments of the song, and the images of love which it calls up, will then be viewed inclosed in a frame-work of great beauty, and in perfect keeping with the poetry; and it is in this way that many of his songs must be examined, to feel their force and beauty.

Burns thought so well of the "Country Lassie," that when he composed it, he sent it to his friend, John M'Murdo, of Drumlanrig, with the following letter:—"A poet and a beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations, were it not that, though, with a trifling license, most poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold that every beggar is a poet. In one particular, however, they re-

markably agree : if you help either the one or the other to the picking of a bone, or a mug of ale, they will very willingly repay you with verse. I feel myself indebted to you, in the style of our ballad-printers, for ‘five excellent new songs.’ The enclosed is nearly my newest song, ‘The Country Lass;’ and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of excellence. With the compliments and best wishes, I send the sincere prayers of the season for you, that you may see many and happy years with Mrs. M‘Murdo, and your family—two blessings, by-the-bye, to which your rank does not by any means entitle you; a loving wife, and a fine family, being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house has an exclusive right.”

That the song cost Burns, as he observes, pains, I have seen proofs, in his own handwriting : of the two originals submitted to my examination, both exhibited variations of sentiment and language, not only from each other, but from the song as it stands in print. The most important of these occurred in the last four lines of the third verse, and are worth preserving.

“But Robie’s heart is frank and free,
Fu’ weel I wat he loes me dear;
And love blinks bonnie in his ee,
For love I’ll wed, and work for gear.”

I cannot help regarding these four lines as more in keeping with the sentiment of the song than those which the poet finally preferred : it is likely that, in working his own name into the strain, he glanced as he wrote at the circumstances of his own story.

DUNCAN GRAY.

“Maggie coost her head fu’ heigh,
Looked asklent and unco’ skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh,
Ha ! ha ! the wooing o’l.”

THIS lively song was written in Dumfries, on the 4th day of December, 1792 ; and the poet thus speaks of it to George Thomson, for whose work it was composed : — “ The foregoing I submit, my dear sir, to your better judgment. Duncan Gray is that kind of light horse-gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.” In his answer Thomson says, “ Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humor will endear him to every body ;” to which the Hon. Andrew Erskine, Thomson’s partner in the Melodies, adds, “ Duncan Gray possesses native genuine humor,—

‘Spak o’ lowpin owre a linn,’

is a line, of itself, which should make you immortal.” The opinions of these writers have been sanctioned by the world, and Duncan Gray finds a place in all collections where merit is the rule of selection.

It had its origin, however, like many of our finest lyric strains, in verses of the same name and of a similar character, but wilder and coarser in every way, where the hero has no right to be called a lad of grace, for he is outspoken and unceremonious. The air has a plebeian origin, and the words have what shepherds call a touch

of the tarred finger. The former was composed, as Burns himself tells us, by a carman of Glasgow; who wrote the earliest words it is needless now to inquire, since they have been silenced for ever by the strains of the Bard of Ayr. The Duncan Gray which appeared in "Johnson's Musical Museum," from the hand of Burns, is in every way purer and better. It begins —

"Weary fa' ye, Duncan Gray,"

and was, while the poet lived in Dumfries, a favorite on Nithside; the second verse has humor and poetry; and contains both commendation and complaint:—

"Bonnie was the Lammas morn;
 Ha! ha! the girdin o't!
 Glowrin a' the hills aboon;
 Ha! ha! the girdin o't!
 The girden brak, the beast cam down,
 I tint my curch and baith my shoon—
 Ah, Duncan ye're an unco loon,
 Wae on the bad girden o't."

Painters have often tried to embody the action and the humor of the third and best version of "Duncan Gray;" and Wilkie, of all others, has come nearest it; but the story of the poet runs on, linking word with word, incident with incident, and connecting the past with the present; while the group of the painter, like the finger of a clock, points but to one moment of time, and thus those who expect to find all that Burns has related represented in the picture, are disappointed: they should consider that art stands still like a canal, while poetry runs onward like a stream. Yet there is much in the verse on which the pencil of the painter will delight to dwell, and he is at liberty too to imagine subsidiary matters to help

him with the ruling sentiment. This will explain why the father and mother, personages unknown to the verse, are introduced in the picture, and the mother's whisper and the father's look influence their not reluctant daughter. Burns accomplishes the conversion of Maggie from disdain to love by one of those revulsions of feeling so common to the female heart, and allows affection to do its duty without aid or assistance.

I remember when I first saw the picture of "Duncan Gray," a little story of rustic courtship arose to my memory, which I related to the great painter:—Immediately below Ellisland, where Burns, when I first saw him, lived, there is a farm called the Isle, in which stands a small gray old tower, once a place of defence and the residence of a gentleman; but in the days of which I speak the dwelling-place of a farmer, who had one fair daughter, whose eyes brought suitors from both sides of the river. It happened one evening that a lover arrived—a man wealthy and well put on—whose outward estate caught the fancy of father and mother, but who failed in making himself at all acceptable to the daughter; who was in the very act of saying "Nay," when her father whispered, "Take him, Jenny, take him! he's weel arrayed; he has twa tap coats and a plaid on!" The goodly apparel carried the day in the vale of Nith, as it carries it in the vale of Thames and on the pavement of Bond street.

MRS. BURNS.

“ There’s not a bonny flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green, —
There’s not a bonny bird that sings,
But minds me o’ my Jean.”

WHEN Bishop Percy lamented that there were few songs in our language expressing the joys of wedded love, Burns was a lad some two-and-twenty years old ; but though his life was brief, he lived long enough to hinder Percy’s remark from continuing proverbial, and gladdened our firesides with strains dedicated to household love, which live in every heart, and are heard from every tongue.

Few of our poets have been happy in their wives : Shakspeare neglected his, and all but forgot her in his will ; Milton, though more than once married, was unable to find that domestic quiet which, perhaps, his own nature prevented him from obtaining ; the poems of Dryden bear witness to the unhappiness of his choice, for the sharpness of his satire has an additional edge when a fling can be had at matrimony ; and Addison sought the comfort abroad, which his wife, the Dowager Countess of Warwick, denied him at home. To this the wife of Burns, the “bonnie Jean” of many a far-famed song, was an exception ; she was a country girl of the west of Scotland, remarkable for the elegance of her person and the sweetness of her voice. Her father was a respectable master-mason in Mauchline, in good employment, and with

a family of eleven children. Jean was born in February 1765, and was, when Burns became intimate with her but newly out of her teens. How her acquaintance with the poet began, she loved to relate : — she had laid some linen webs down on the grass to bleach, and while sprinkling them with water from the neighboring burn, a favorite collie of the poet's ran across them, staining them with its feet, to fawn upon her ; she struck at the dog, when Burns stepped forward, and reproached her in the words of Allan Ramsay : —

“E'en as he fawned, she strak the poor dumb tyke.”

The fair bleacher smiled, and an acquaintance commenced, which a country place like Mauchline afforded many opportunities to promote.

This ripened into love ; she was united to Burns, and during his too short life, bore to him four sons and five daughters, three of whom, and these all men, survive. She was a kind and dutiful wife, an affectionate mother, and a good neighbor. All who knew her liked her ; and though country bred, and with moderate education, she was not wanting in conversation fit for the most accomplished, and left an impression of her good sense on the many strangers who, like pilgrims to a shrine, went to see her for the sake of the Bard. It should be added, that she danced with grace and neatness, and sang, moreover, Scottish songs, with a spirit, a feeling, and a sweetness, but seldom found together. “She has,” says Burns to Miss Chalmers, “the finest wood-note-wild I ever heard.”

The two best songs which her charms called forth are those beginning —

and — “Of a' the airts the win' can blaw,”

“O were I on Parnassus' hill.”

The former was written, as he himself tells us, during the honey-moon : and what a glorious welcome to his new farm does the latter contain ! Had he welcomed her to Hagley or to Stowe, the strain could not have come more freely from the heart, or had more of passion or of poetry about it. One of these alone had been enough to have embalmed the name of a mistress in song ; but the two together have immortalized a wife.

But there are other songs, excellent of their kind, and only inferior in beauty because they cannot abide comparison with things perfect, that record the beauty of Jean Armour. How exquisite is this brief strain—the finest essences are held in the smallest bottles :—

“ Louis, what reck I by thee,
Or Geordie on his ocean ?
Dyvor, beggar-loons to me —
I reign in Jeanie’s bosom.

“ Let her crown my love her law,
And in her breast enthrone me ;
Kings and nations — swith, awa !
Reif randies, I disown ye !”

Jean Armour, whose name has no chance of passing from the earth, died on Wednesday, the 26th of March, 1834, and was buried by the side of her husband, whom she had survived nearly eight-and-thirty years.

BURNS AND GAVIN HAMILTON AT NANSE TINNOCK'S.

“Tell yon guid bluid o’ auld Boconnock’s
I’ll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,
And drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock’s,
Nine times a week.”

IN a note on the above verse, Burns says, “A worthy old hostess of the author’s in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.” When honest Nanse heard these lines for the first time, it is said she exclaimed, “Nine times a week! Oh! sirs, how these rhymers are gi’en to lying: and ‘studies politics owre a glass of Scotch drink!’ a hen-bird might drink a’ at a draught he ever drank in my house. I never saw the color o’ his coin.” Nanse Tinnock was the Meg Dods of Mauchline; and while she brewed good ale for all and sundry, she was discreet and cautious in whatever regarded her customers. When some fretful wife came seeking her husband, Nanse generally eluded all direct response to the inquiry by saying, “He seldom darkens my doors; but if ye misdoubt my word, gang in, and if ye find your joe, ye’ll have a brighter een than mine.” At other times a tarter reply was needful—“Have I yere goodman in my pouch, think ye, that I can produce him when he’s wanted?” Yet she occasionally took upon her the part of those who with a soft answer seek to turn away wrath, and was, moreover, a kind host-

ess to all comers : those who sought ale, got bread and cheese also. The bread consisted of the "knuckled cakes weel brandered brown," of the old Scottish song : and as Nanse set them on the board, she would say, "Foul fa' them that ever separate the blood of barley from the heart of corn." Her house, like herself, was kept clean and neat ; she admitted no strolling mendicants, such as harbored at Poosy Nansie's, and toomed their bags and pawned their rags, and yet left their thirst unquenched. Her house stands in the way by which the poet came to Mauchline from Mossgiel : it is of two stories, and was built in the year 1744.

Of Nanse we have said perhaps enough : and of Gavin Hamilton, the poet has told, that he was a social and witty and friendly gentleman, who loved to puzzle the too puritanic clergy of the district by his learning and his acuteness, and incense them by the neglect of ordinances and ceremonies, which they considered as essential to salvation. To the latter part of their complaint, the poet has neatly alluded in some lines omitted in the "Dedication."

" He sometimes gallops on a Sunday,
And pricks the beast as if 'twere Monday."

Hamilton was of the family of Kype, in Lanarkshire, and a lawyer of good practice and character. The house in which he lived when Burns was his visiter, formed part of a place of strength connected with the Priory of Mauchline, and is now inhabited by one of his sons. At his table the poet was a welcome guest ; and it was there, on his return from church, that he repeated, before he wrote down, the sarcastic poem of "The Calf." In after days, when Fame, as he said, blew her trumpet at his

approach, he saw Charlotte Hamilton, his friend's sister, on the banks of the Devon; and struck with her beauty, bestowed those attentions and offered that homage which writers have not scrupled to call—love. But the reputation of the poet in love-matters, it is like, had gone before him, and hindered his merits from having their proper influence over a proud bosom: be that as it may, the hand he had hoped for, poetically at least, was bestowed on another, and Burns had to recall his thoughts from Devon to Doon. It happened that in the room where the poet repeated "The Calf," he received the hand of Jean Armour, whose father's house was close at hand.

The persecution which Hamilton suffered at the hands of his parish minister, the Daddy Auld of the satires of Burns, looks strange now, even in Scottish eyes. He was accused of wilful absence from church for five Sundays running—of journeying to Carrick on the Sabbath—of habitual neglect of family worship—and of writing a satiric letter to the kirk session, on account of their proceedings against him. Wilful absence from church, ostentatious journeyings on the sabbath, and neglect of family worship, are still regarded in the North as matters not, at least, to be commended. But few clergymen now would think it either charitable or wise to use the thunder of the church in crushing errors which are ever amenable to kindly persuasion, and mild admonition. The clergy north, indeed, as well as south, ought to feel more alarm lest some infidel-hand should rudely pull down the whole christian fabric, than for the sharpest lampoons that satire can pen, or for persisting in such errors as Hamilton was accused of. The kirk of Scotland did not sympathize with the minister of Mauchline; the presbytery caused the proceedings to be stopped, and all entries of them

removed from the records. The house of Kype claims a high pedigree : on a visit of the laird to Hamilton Palace, the Duke haughtily asked, " In what part of the tree of my Hamiltons is the house of Kype to be found ?" " Ye cannot find the root among the branches," said the ancestor of Gavin proudly ; and his retort became proverbial.

WILLIE BREWED A PECK O' MAUT.

“ O Willie brewed a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan came to see ;
Three blither hearts the lee-lang night,
Ye wadna find in Christendie.
We are na fou, we're no that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e :
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And ay we'll taste the barley bree.”

THIS is one of the Ellisland songs, and ranks with the best of the compositions of Burns in buoyancy and humor; nor is the scene unreal, or the persons whom it celebrates imaginary. When the poet took to the plough at Ellisland, and found but few joyous spirits in the vale of Nith, he desired to have at least one sure and social friend near; and as the little estate of Laggan was for sale, and lay at no great distance from his own door, he persuaded William Nicol, one of the masters of the High-school of Edinburgh, to purchase it, and so become his neighbor during vacation time. Among other improvements, the new proprietor built a house: and to have it “heated” rightly, he invited Burns from Ellisland, and Allan Masterton, the musician, from Dalswinton, and promised them the best of liquor and the warmest of welcomes. The poet and his friend accordingly waited on the “illustrious lord of Laggan’s many hills;” the meeting was friendly and joyous, and extended, so the tradition of the land asserts, from the going down to the rising of the sun. The punch was made, it is said, in the poet’s bowl, by the experienced hand of Nicol, who was a jovial person, and,

as well as Masterton, no flincher at a carousal; the two guests were so pleased, that they resolved, each in their own way, to celebrate the business: and the fine air, and still finer song, of "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," was the consequence.

The three heroes of this celebrated lyric died all early in life; they fell more through the strength of their passions, it is said, than from fair natural decay. Burns went first; Nicol followed; nor did Masterton remain long behind. "They were all under the turf," says Currie, "in 1799." Several of the songs of Burns were furnished with airs by Allan: those who are curious to learn with what skill this was done, may be satisfied by looking into that equally valuable and curious work, "Johnson's Musical Museum." The musician enjoyed life too keenly to last long; but his airs will endure, and the memory of his name will live, in the "Willie brewed a peck o' maut" and "Strathallan's Lament" of his friend, and the beauty of his daughter, in the song, dedicated by Burns to her agreeable manners and good looks, beginning with —

"Ye gallants bright, I rede ye right
Beware o' bonnie Ann;
Her comely face sae fou o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan.
Youth, grace, and love, attendant move,
And pleasure leads the van;
In a' their charms and conquering arms,
They wait on bonnie Ann."

The name of Nicol has no such airs as those of "Strathallan's Lament," or "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," to preserve it from forgetfulness: he is chiefly remembered as a fierce disputatious pedant, who loved drink and contradiction, and desired to take and keep the lead

in conversation. To his pride Burns made some serious sacrifices during one of his Highland excursions. On reaching Fochabers, the poet went to renew his acquaintance with the gay Duchess of Gordon; and when dinner was over, and the wine had begun to circulate, he rose, and on being pressed to stay, mentioned that a fellow-traveller was waiting for him at the inn. The invitation was courteously extended to Nicol; and Burns, accompanied by a Gordon, waited on the dominie, and delivered it in all the forms of politeness. "The invitation," says Currie, "came too late; the pride of Nicol was inflamed into a high degree of passion by the neglect which he had already suffered. He had ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, being determined to proceed on his journey alone; and they found him parading the streets of Fochabers, before the door of the inn, venting his anger on the postillion for the slowness with which he obeyed his commands. As no explanation nor entreaty would change the purpose of his fellow traveller, our poet was reduced to the necessity of separating from him entirely, or of instantly proceeding with him on their journey. He chose the last of these alternatives; and, seating himself beside Nicol in the post-chaise, with mortification and regret, he turned his back on Gordon Castle, where he had promised himself some happy days." How Burns came to associate himself with the intractable scholar, we may inquire in vain; it would appear that the poet had received a regular invitation to Gordon Castle; that Mr. Addington, now Viscount Sidmouth, and Dr. Beattie, were invited to meet him, and that the Duke and Duchess hoped to help his fortunes by showing him in an advantageous light to these and other guests; — but

"The best laid schemes o' mine and men
Gang aft agley."

PEGGY.—NOW WESTLIN WIN'S.

“Not vernal showers to budding flowers,
Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer.”

THIS is one of the earliest of the Poet's lyrics, and its heroine was one of the earliest of his mistresses ; the song mingles true love with true landscape, and entwines very gracefully the emotions of his youthful heart round the beautiful in external nature. Burns felt—for he was a farmer—the joy of the season ; and he knew the pleasure of a twilight walk with one who shared in his feelings, for he was an ardent lover : yet he was less lucky in his wooing than in his song. To this person he addressed some very sensible and beautiful letters, several of which were published, and then withdrawn, by Currie ; and to her he dedicated four lyrics, of which the one beginning “ Now westlin win's ” is the best. She was alarmed, it is said, when one or two of the poet's epistles to her appeared in print ; more so at the allusions in his account of himself to Moore : nor was it to be wondered at ; for the free life which he led, as well as his unceremonious language, alarmed the delicacy of many ladies who admired his genius.

It appears that “ Montgomery's Peggie,” as he calls her in one of his songs, was a young woman well educated, and of a higher station than himself ; she was handsome

too, and had the merit of knowing it; and, pleased with the eloquence and with the incense offered her in song, she permitted Burns to indulge in his dream of love for some six or eight months, and then informed him that she had promised her hand to another, at which he was as sorrowful as he was exasperated. Perhaps her decision was influenced by the darkening fortunes of the farmer; the clouds of misfortune were gathering round his father's head, and bankruptcy and death were at hand. "To crown my distresses," he says, in his letter to Moore, "*a belle fille*, whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me with peculiar circumstances of mortification." These peculiar circumstances of mortification did not however hinder him afterwards from wishing her well in a song.

" Ye powers of honor, love, and truth,
 From every ill defend her;
 Inspire the highly-favored youth
 The destinies intend her:
 Still fan the sweet connubial flame
 Responsive in each bosom,
 And bless the dear parental name
 With many a filial blossom."

These are but cold lines: how different is the rapture of the verse dedicated to her beauty, when her refusal was unspoken, and hope was high.

" Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
 I ever mair defy them;
 Young kings upon their hansel throne
 Are no sae blest as I am.
 When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
 I clasp my countless treasure,
 I seek nae mair, O heaven! to share,
 Than sic a moment's pleasure."

In an equally ardent, but in a more respectful strain, Burns celebrates, in the song of “Westlin win’s” before us, the delight which he experienced when straying with his Montgomery’s Peggie among the fields of ripening grain, or musing on her loveliness in the light of the moon.

“Now westlin win’s and slaughtering guns
Bring autumn’s pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirring wings,
Among the blooming heather:
Now waving grain wide o’er the plain
Delights the weary farmer,
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night
To muse upon my charmer.”

In sober prose he relates the upshot of his musing and his courting. “My Montgomery’s Peggie was my deity for six or eight months: she had been bred in a style of life rather elegant; but, as Vanbrugh says, ‘My damned star found me out there too;’ I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or to tell the truth, which will scarcely be believed—a vanity of showing my parts in courtship—particularly my abilities in a *billet doux*, on which I always piqued myself; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time the rightful property of another. It cost me some heart-aches to get rid of the affair.” These light words of the poet seem well suited to the character of a lady who could listen to the addresses, and saunter beneath the moon, with one man, while she was the “rightful property” of another.

LAMENT FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

“The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen :
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been,
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me ?”

“SURELY,” says Dryden, when speaking of the little patronage which the poetical genius of this country has met with, “it is enough for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley, and to have starved Mr. Butler.” He might have added—to have let Otway die with hunger. For our own age, it is a sufficient disgrace that Chatterton and Burns were left to die neglected—the one a youth of some sixteen, the other of six and thirty ; the one a mere boy, the other at an age when the majority of the great men of our nation were but opening into blossom, and had given but slender promise of what was to come.

Burns had but one true patron, and death removed that one almost as soon as he was found. This was James Cunningham, Earl of Glencairn, a nobleman whose descent and title were his least recommendations to notice, and whose name will live imperishably in the works of one whose genius he was among the first to perceive, and whose welfare he was the most active and eager to promote.

At his first visit to Edinburgh, Burns was introduced through Dalrymple, of Orangefield, in Ayrshire, to the Earl of Glencairn; "a man," says the bard, "whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more." By his interest, the noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, to the number of one hundred, took one and all a copy of the first Edinburgh edition of his poems, for which they paid a guinea each, while the price to the other subscribers was but six shillings. The Earl himself, though far from rich, took twenty-four. "The baneful star," the poet writes to Dr. Moore, "that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men, the Earl of Glencairn."

To this generous Earl there are, in the letters of Burns, very frequent and gratifying allusions. Invariably is he spoken of as the one by whose patronage and goodness he had been rescued from obscurity, from wretchedness, and from exile; as his best friend—his first and dearest patron and benefactor. "The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother," he writes to the last Earl of Glencairn, "found me in the lowest obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country, and to him I owe all." This is the language of one obliged. "Nor shall my gratitude perish with me!" he assures Lady Betty Cunningham. "If among my children I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honor and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn."

When the poet was ornamenting his farm-house at

Ellisland, he hung the portraits of Dr. Blacklock and the Earl of Glencairn over his parlor chimney-piece. Beneath the portrait of Glencairn he had written some eulogistic lines, which he submitted to his Lordship's approval, and sought his permission to make public. This the Earl seems to have refused; and it has been said that the poet, stung by the refusal, destroyed his own copy of the verses, as many had sought for them in vain. But this is not the case; the poet's rough copy of them is in the keeping of his son, Captain James Glencairn Burns, and with his kind permission they now appear for the first time in print.

LINES INTENDED TO BE WRITTEN UNDER A NOBLE
EARL'S PICTURE.

" Whose is that noble, dauntless brow ?
And whose that eye of fire ?
And whose that generous princely mien,
E'en rooted foes admire ?
Stranger ! to justly show that brow,
And mark that eye of fire,
Would take *His* hand, whose vernal tints
His other works inspire.

" Bright as a cloudless summer sun,
With stately port he moves ;
His guardian seraph eyes with awe
The noble ward he loves —
Among th' illustrious Scottish sons
That chief thou may'st discern ;
Mark Scotia's fond returning eye —
It dwells upon Glencairn."

The subject of these verses died on the 30th of January, 1791, at the age of forty-two ;

“O why has worth so short a date,
While villains ripen gray with time?”

He was succeeded in the title by his brother, who survived him but a short time, and at whose death the title became extinct. Burns went into mourning for his noble patron, nor was his mourning “the mockery of woe.” Where there is fiction there is little grief, says Johnson; but surely, in the Lament for Glencairn, there is true fiction and there is deep grief.

THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

“ Let fortune’s gifts at random flee,
They ne’er shall draw a wish frae me,
Supremely blest wi’ love and thee,
In the Birks of Aberfeldy.”

THE happy mixture of landscape and love, in the song of “The Birks of Aberfeldy,” has made it popular with all admirers of natural scenery and woman’s beauty, and rendered the place classic: for visiters from other countries than England resort there, when the woods are in leaf, and the Falls have lowered their voice, and imagine where Burns stood when he conceived the song. “I composed these stanzas,” he says in his notes on “The Musical Museum,” “under the Falls of Aberfeldy, at or near Moness;” and from his first Highland tour, we learn that this happened about the beginning of September, 1787; the entry in his memoranda is briefly this, “Aberfeldy—described in rhyme.” It seems much the pleasure of the Scottish poets to work into their strains the names of the hills, and vales, and woods, and streams of their native land. The two James’s, First and Fifth—poets of a high order—sang of Peblis to the Play, and Christ’s Kirk on the Green; Ramsay made Habbie’s Howe famous, in what Burns truly calls, “the only pastoral of nature in the language.” Both Crawford and Hamilton remembered the Tweed in their songs; Thomson rendered his native valley vocal in “The Seasons;” Leyden conferred a new interest on Teviotdale; Scott

hallowed the whole Border, and threw his mantle over the Highlands; Hogg loved, like the fairies, to haunt green and lovely places; and a whole district has been called the Land of Burns, because it supplied him with scenes and persons for his poems and songs.

Many of the lyrics of Burns had their origin in curious scraps of old verse, with which his memory was well stored; not a few of them were inspired by the sweetness of some fine scene; and all of them, more or less, were influenced by the charms of some favorite beauty. From all these sources the song of "The Birks of Aberfeldy" appears to have come, for all may be traced in it. On passing Tay Bridge the poet made his way to the Falls of Aberfeldy; tradition says, he was accompanied by several friends, and among them a young lady, whom fame has wronged by neglecting to name. The charms of his companion, the beauty of the Falls, and the remembrance of an old strain, wrought so in him, that unbidden numbers came; and he composed the song, which includes them all, before he quitted the spot or the lady left his arm. Such scenes and such circumstances always exercised an influence over Burns; many of his most exquisite compositions came from him by accident, and without study. It was in compliment to a chance meeting with Miss Alexander, that he wrote "The Lass of Ballochmyle;" a smile from a clergyman's daughter, where he happened to dine, produced "The Blue-eyed Lass;" the request of a brother exciseman brought "The Deil came fiddling through the town" into existence; and a thunder-shower, like the trumpet-sound, gave life to "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." This list might easily be lengthened.

Of the old strain which suggested at least the measure as well as the chorus of that of Burns, the curious in

such matters will find it in our old collections; the air, which is a fine one, is inserted in a book, both old and rare, called "Playford's Dancing Master," where it is ascribed to Scotland. The name of the original song is "The Birks of Abergeldy," and the heroine seems not to have been of the trusting nature of the lady who accompanied Burns.

"Bonnie lassie, will ye go,
 Will ye go, will ye go;
 Bonnie lassie, will ye go
 To the Birks of Abergeldy?
 An' ye sall get a gown o' silk,
 A gown o' silk, a gown o' silk;
 Ye sall get a gown o' silk,
 And a coat o' calimance."

The young lady's mother, as well as the heroine herself, seems to have regarded this invitation as insidious; the latter replies:

"Na, kind sir, I daurna gang,
 I daurna gang, I daurna gang;
 Na, kind sir, I daurna gang,
 My minnie she'll be angry.
 Sair sair wad she flyte,
 Wad she flyte, wad she flyte,
 Sair sair wad she flyte,
 And sair wad she ban me."

Very few of the heroines of our old lyrics were so considerate as the lass of Abergeldy. Those intimate with our national poetry cannot but know, that whatever may have been the actions of our ancestors, their speech in song was, at least, very free and indecorous. The world owes much to Burns, for having, as he happily expressed it, thrashed the loose sentiments out of our early lyrics, and rendered them incapable of raising a blush on the cheek of beauty.

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO.

“ John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither ;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither :
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo.”

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO has furnished matter for many painters and inspired many poets ; but of all the strains of the latter, those of Burns continue unrivalled for liquid ease, domestic love, and elegant simplicity. The old Scottish bard who first furnished words to the air, threw his hand carelessly and roughly over the strings of his harp, and sang a strain equally unceremonious and indelicate. Some versifier of the west of Scotland had the hardihood to add his “ Paisley harn” to the “ Snaw-white seventeen hunder linen” of Burns ; whose exquisite verses had for several years to carry the ungracious burden, in spite of the eloquent and indignant remonstrances of Currie. Yet in the ancient strain we find something like the rudiments of the new.

“ John Anderson my jo, John,
Come in as ye gae by,
And ye sall get a sheep's-head
Weel baken in a pie :
Weel baken in a pie, John,
And haggis in a pat,
John Anderson my jo, John,
Come in an' ye'se get that.”

The lady held out other allurements of a more gracious kind, and John Anderson, though proof against the temptations of the table, was unable to resist this rustic Delilah. We shall now turn from Percy's "Black-Book of Ballads," where the eldern John is to be found, to the bard who ventured to eke out in Brash's and Reid's "Poetry Original and Selected," the living and vivid strain of Burns. In that curious miscellany, the song is said indeed to be "improved" by the great Robert; but though there is an occasional boldness of expression which reminds us of his hand, there is also such feebleness and want of propriety as he has nowhere else exhibited. The following verse has a Burns-like sound:—

" John Anderson my jo, John,
 When nature first began
 To try her cannie hand, John,
 Her master work was man;
 And you amang them a', John,
 So trig frae top to toe,
 She proved to be nae journey-work,
 John Anderson my joe."

But in the feeble warp of the succeeding verses, there is no weft of gold.

" John Anderson my jo, John,
 I wonder what you mean,
 To rise sae soon in the morning, John,
 And sit sae late at e'en;
 Ye'll blear out a' your e'en, John,
 And why should you do so?
 Gang sooner to your bed at e'en,
 John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
 Frae year to year we've past,
 And soon that year maun come, John,
 Will bring us to our last;

But let na' that affright us, John,
Our hearts were ne'er our foe,
While in innocent delight we lived,
John Anderson my joe."

This song was composed at Ellisland, and came from the muse of Burns before the dread of want disturbed him or the voice of the French Revolution sounded in his ear. He turned his furrow in hope, committed with joy his seed-corn to the ground, and looking up—which he was fond of doing—the vista of futurity, saw his own gray head honored, his wife in matron grace at his side, and his "bairns' bairns" smiling around. There is much of the man in all the lyrics of Burns; and through these compositions his passions and his hopes, his enjoyments and his sorrows, may be traced distinctly.

THE WOUNDED HARE.

“Inhuman man! curse on thy barb’rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye,
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart.”

THE poem of “The Wounded Hare” had its origin on Nithsdale, and in a real occurrence. Burns had gone out, as was his custom, along the bank of the river, to take, what he called, a twilight shot at the muses. It was in April, 1789: the corn-braird was getting above the clod; herbs were shooting out tender and green; and a hare might, if she ventured out, pick up a dangerous morsel on haugh or holm. He had, it seems, now and then observed a hare taking a nibble on his own wheat-braird; but so far from molesting her, he rather regarded her kindly as he did the mouse on a similar occasion, and said in his heart,—

“I’ll get a blessing wi’ the lave,
An’ never miss’t.”

The poor hare, perhaps, saw too that he meant her no harm, and took the other mouthful. But she had failed to earn the compassion of one of the poet’s neighbors, who stole out on her with his gun one evening, and sent her wounded and bleeding past where Burns was sauntering. The poem was composed in the moment, and he himself tells us, “On a Wounded Hare, which a fellow had just shot at.”

The curse of the poet was uttered in vain : James Thomson, who wounded the hare, lived to old age, unconscious that a malediction in rhyme had been delivered against him ; and I have heard him express much surprise, at what he called "the kippage and pucker" into which a random shot at a silly hare had thrown Burns. Indeed, he set it down as one of those distempered sallies, in which men misled by the muse are prone, it is said, to indulge. His own version of the story differed only in sensibility from that of the poet. The hares, he said, were numerous that spring, and he had seen half a dozen at a time on his father's wheat-field which lay on the march of Ellisland. This he did not like : so he stole out with his gun, and took a long shot at a hare and hit her, but on following with the hope of seeing her drop, he came unexpectedly on Burns, who cursed him bitterly, and said he had a good mind to throw him into the Nith. "And could he have done so?" I inquired, looking at Thomson, who was both active and strong. "Could he hae done it!" exclaimed he, in evident wonder at the question; "deil a doubt but he could hae done it: he was mair than a match for most men."

The field on which the hare was wounded is still pointed out, as well as the spot where the poet and the farmer had the angry parley. The latter is where the highland of the farm sinks into the holm, the poet's favorite musing place ; for there he composed "Tam o' Shanter," and several of his finest lyrics ; and there also some visitors from the south found him, with a rough fur cap on his head, a broadsword at his side, and a rod in his hand, angling for salmon. The place of itself is beautiful: the clover-sward bank — the green and winding hedge

rows — the orchards and gardens of the Isle — and the Nith, as clear as crystal, sweeping past — are all at hand ; while in the distance the Carse, where the Danish whistle was contended for — Dalswinton, where the Comyns lived of old, and where steam navigation had its origin — the tower of the Isle rising old and gray amid its fruit-trees, and round which the remains of the moat are still visible, — connect it with the history of the land, as well as with the poetry.

The criticisms which Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh ventured to make on the poem, were more severe than just, and irritated the poet worse than any other experiments which the professors of “the ungentle craft” hazarded on his patience. “The Wounded Hare,” thus wrote the critic, “is a pretty good subject ; but the measure you have chosen is not a good one ; it does not flow well. The execrations in the first stanza are too strong or coarse ; ‘murder-aiming’ is a bad compound epithet, and not very intelligible ; ‘blood-stained’ in stanza third has the same fault ; ‘bleeding bosom’ is infinitely better. You have accustomed yourself to such epithets, and have no notion how stiff and quaint they appear to others, and how incongruous with poetic fancy and tender sentiments. ‘Mangled’ is a coarse word ; ‘innocent’ is a nursery word, but both may pass. In the title of your copy of verses you use the word ‘fellow ;’ it is a colloquial and vulgar word, unsuitable to your sentiments. ‘Shot’ is improper too : on seeing a person wound a hare, it is needless to say with what weapon ; but if you think otherwise, you should say, with a fowling-piece.” When Burns was asked whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms, “Sir,” said he, “these gentlemen are like some

spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine, that it is neither fit for weft nor woof." And of the criticisms of Gregory on "The Wounded Hare," he said, "He is a good man, but he crucifies me. I believe in the iron justice of Dr. Gregory; but like the devils, I believe and tremble."

NAEBODY.

“ I hae a penny to spend
There — thanks to naebody :
I hae nothing to lend —
I’ll borrow frae naebody.
I am naebody’s lord,
I’ll be a slave to naebody :
I hae a gude braid sword,
I’ll tak dunts frae naebody.”

ENJOYMENT always called on the muse of Burns for the sanction of song : he wrote—or rather poured out, for it was unpremeditated—the free, the happy, and forcible strain of “ I hae a penny to spend,” on his first coming to Ellisland. “ Pleased,” says Currie, “ with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building which should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own gray hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic peace and content rose on his imagination, and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest which he had ever experienced.” The poet gave voice to these feelings in this clever song : and it was probably on the day he composed it that he put a fox-skin cap on his head, buckled a claymore to his side, and walked down to the Nith, where he was found angling in that strange trim by some southern visiters. The place is yet pointed out where this interview took place, and the walk

by the river-side where he loved to stroll when the muse possessed him. Yet, with youth and hope before him, and a kind wife and a fair farm, Burns, even in his earliest days of possession, was unsettled and uneasy; he rode, and he ran; now he might be seen looking at the rising walls of his new onstead of houses; then putting his ploughshare into the soil, and turning a furrow: or mounted on his horse and riding through the Nith, to seek the company which he thought was slow in seeking him.

It was some time before he even settled down seriously into song, or got into full friendship with his neighbors. "I am here," he said, speaking of Nithsdale, "at the very elbow of existence; the only things that are to be found in perfection in this country are stupidity and canting; prose they only know in graces and prayers, and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiden-webs—by the ell; as for the muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as a poet." In a similar strain, and perhaps with more bitterness, he thus writes in verse to his friend Hugh Parker. He at that time occupied the old smoky farm-house of Ellisland; a low miserable abode, with a floor of earth, a roof of sooty rafters and turf, without a window that would open, or a chimney equal to the wants of the hearth fire.

" In this strange land, this uncouth clime —
 A land unknown to prose or rhyme:
 Where words ne'er crossed the Muses' heckles,
 Nor limpit in poetic shackles;
 A land that Prose did never view it
 Except when drunk he stachered through it.
 Here ambushed by the chimla cheek,
 Hid in an atmosphere of reek,
 I hear a wheel thrum i' the neuk,
 I hear it — for in vain I leuk.

Here, for my wonted rhyming raptures
 I sit and count my sins by chapters :
 For life and spunk, like other Christians,
 I'm dwindled down to mere existence ;
 Nae converse but wi' Gallowa bodies,
 Wi' nae ken'd face but Jenny Geddes."

The old smoky farm-house infected but for a short while the atmosphere of the poet's mind ; song soon cleared it up ; and the intercourse which ensued with the Maxwells, the Kirkpatricks, the Dalzells, and the M'Murdos, made him aware that the land had high-souled men and spirits approaching to his own mental stamp. The old air of "Naebody," to which the song of Burns was composed, had till his day been encumbered with idle and ridiculous verses ; yet frequently to such snatches as the following the poet was indebted for his inspiration.

"I hae a wife o' my ain,
 I'll be hadden to naebody ;
 I hae a pot and a pan,
 I'll borrow frae naebody."

It would appear, too, that he thought, while he wrote, of the independent and jolly miller of Dee, the burthen of whose song was, that he cared for nobody. Burns concludes his song in almost similar words : —

"I'll be merry and free,
 I'll be sad for naebody :
 If naebody care for me,
 I'll care for naebody."

The task would be endless and unprofitable to trace the Scottish muse through the wilderness of song, and intimate where she has imitated and borrowed ; it may be said with safety, that she has seldom condescended to

borrow from foreign sources, or to imitate strains which were not produced in the land of the heather and thistle ; and of Burns in particular it can be asserted, that he never borrowed, save to mend — or imitated, except to improve.

THE VISION.

“And wear thou this, — she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head ;
The polished leaves and berries red
Did rustling play ;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.”

“THE VISION” was written at Mossgiel, a place fruitful in the poetry of Burns : he regarded it as one of his happiest compositions ; it has, as Currie remarks, great and various excellence. He at once compliments his own genius, and his native county. The handling is not more original than the conception : the celestial visitants of other bards find them in marble palaces, flowery fields, or in romantic glens by the side of crystal streams : the muse of the ploughman bard finds him in a humble and smoky abode ; and though attired for walking on sapphire and amber floors, she enters, without hesitation, into “ the mottie misty clime,” to cheer him from that despondency which dunces never feel. It was high time to interpose : weary with the labor at a farm which refused a proper return, he sat moodily by his own fireside, and as the shades of night closed in, eyed the surging smoke, and listened to the squeaking of the rats in the thatch of his cottage,

“ And backward mused on wasted time ” —

how he had spent his youth, and done little, save composing idle strains for fools to sing. Had he but listened, he thought, to good counsel, he might have ruled the

market, or presided in a banking house ; but now half-mad, half-fed, and half-clad, was the whole amount. Stung by these reflections, he raised his right hand, according to the custom of Scotland, to swear by the starry sky, or some other rash oath, that he would rhyme no more, when the muse suddenly entered, to stop a vow which she knew would soon have been broken.

Painters and sculptors have exhausted their colors and their beau-ideal shapes, in attempts to embody this modest and beautiful visiter : while they catch celestial hues, and model celestial shapes, they allow the peculiar expression and sentiment to escape. Her looks are of the North : she is young and lovely : her brows are wreathed with holly ; and she wears a robe on which are pictured the hills and dales, and heroes and heroines, of the district over which she presides as guardian muse. It seems to have been the wish of the poet to compliment the lords and ladies of Ayrshire ; and to introduce them, he has burdened the muse with all his patrons and patronesses, as well as with their mansions and estates. “ The robe of Coila ” is a poetic map of the county, interspersed with bits of biography. But she did not come only to be looked at : she thus addresses him : —

“ All hail, my own inspired bard :

In me thy native muse regard,

Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard ;

Thus poorly low !

I come to give thee such reward

As we bestow.

“ With future hope I oft would gaze,

Fond, on thy little early ways,

Thy rudely carolled chiming phrase

In uncouth rhymes,

Fired at the simple, artless lays

Of other times.

“ I saw thy pulse’s madd’ning play,
Wild send thee Pleasure’s devious way,
Misled by Fancy’s meteor ray,
By Passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

“ I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now o’er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila’s plains,
Become thy friends.”

The poet heard these words with a rapture which he sought not to dissemble; and gazed with wonder and awe on the muse, while she proceeded to tell him to choose his themes from the husbandman’s cot and the shepherd’s sheil, nor aspire to the moving warmth of Gray, nor the landscape glow of Thomson: fame of a humbler kind awaited him. As she said this, she placed her own wreath of holly on his head, and vanished away in light.

Burns was not singular among the poets in desiring a more profitable calling than that of verse. Drummond thus writes of Ben Jonson: — “ He dissuaded me from poesie, for that she beggared him, when he might have been a rich lawyer, physician, or merchant.” Ben seems to have entertained the same notion of genius, as that in after years expressed by Johnson the second: “ A mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction.” And Dryden, unaware of what the dramatist said, thus writes of himself: — “ The same parts and application which have made me a poet, might have raised me to any honors of the gown.”

THE POOR AND HONEST SODGER.

“ She gaz’d—she redden’d like a rose—
 Syne pale like onie lily ;
She sank within my arms, and cried,
 Art thou my ain dear Willie ?
By Him who made yon sun and sky,
 By whom true love’s regarded,
I am the man ; and thus may still
 True lovers be rewarded.”

“ I was a lad of fifteen,” says Sir Walter Scott, “ in 1786-7, when Burns first came to Edinburgh ; but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him. . . . As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson’s, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sat silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns’s manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury’s, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath,—

‘ Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden’s plain,
 Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain—
Bent o’er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears.’

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were ; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure."

With feelings akin to what the poet felt on the sight of Bunbury's picture, Burns saw "a poor and honest sodger" pass the door of one of his favorite retreats, the Inn at Brownhill near Dumfries. Struck with the appearance of this "son of Mars," with

" That gallant badge, the dear cockade,"

the poet called him in, got him to relate his story, listened attentively to his adventures, felt as the soldier felt, and wrote as if imbued with a soldier's and a patriot's feelings :

" When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning ;
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning,
I left the lines and tented fields,
Where long I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor but honest sodger."

Burns has touched the strings of every true soldier's heart in this exquisite song ; and the air — The Mill Mill O — is exceedingly beautiful. "The poor and honest sodger" was sung as soon as heard in every vale and on every hill ; in every cot, house, village, and town ; yet the Poet who wrote it was thought by many to be no

well-wisher to his country;—as if this verse came not from the heart of the man that penned it:—

“ For gold the merchant ploughs the main
The farmer ploughs the manor ;
But glory is the sodger’s prize,
The sodger’s wealth is Honor.
The brave, poor sodger ne’er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger :
Remember he’s his country’s stay
In day and hour of danger.”

Brownhill Inn is a very nice road-side retreat. Many worse dinners may be had than what it supplied some years ago to the writer of this article. The landlord loved then—he may do so still—to talk of Burns, and point to windows that once held panes increased to fifty times their market value by the diamond of the poet; to regret that they are not *all* there still—and to show scratches of verse, which many, unlike the worthy landlord, have looked upon as enviable because genuine reliques. Many are the places where the admirers of Burns have cut lines and names in feeble imitation of the poet’s manly hand : almost all pointed out in Nithsdale to the curious in such matters are forgeries; one or two, among others, on the windows of the Globe Inn at Dumfries. At Ellisland, this solitary line was all that then existed from the poet’s hand :—

“ An honest man’s the noblest work of God.”

I hope the pane is preserved—carelessness may break it, and autograph-hunters and antiquarians may remove it altogether.

DR. CURRIE.

JAMES CURRIE, author of the *Life*, and first editor of the *Works of Burns*, was born the 31st of May, 1756, in Kirkpatrick-Fleming, Dumfries-shire, where his father was minister. He was sent while almost a child to the school of Middlebie; he studied while a boy under Dr. Chapman, in the High-school of Dumfries; and then went to the University of Edinburgh, where he acquired skill in physic and a taste for literature. He seems to have hesitated for some time in the choice of a profession: he thought of the army, and of the church; and when at last he turned to medicine, he was uncertain in what quarter of the world to fix his residence. He went to America—he returned to Scotland—but nothing permanent presented itself. Accident, which has much to do with the fortunes of men, took him to Liverpool, where his gentlemanly manners, his ready skill, and his taste in all literary questions, made him acceptable to the merchant-princes of the place, and acceptable also to Lucy Wallace, to whom he was married in 1783. He soon became distinguished in his profession, and intimate with Roscoe and Rathbone, now widely known for their elegant attainments; he assisted in the establishment of the Literary Society; wrote discourses and essays, equally clear and elegant; and stood foremost of that band of eminent men, who shed the lustre of literature upon Liverpool. His ablest professional paper is called “*Medical Reports on the Effects of Water, cold and warm, as*

a Remedy for Fever and other Diseases, whether applied to the Surface of the Body, or used internally ;” and to this we owe the happy interposition of cold instead of hot draughts between burning fever and human life. His last literary production is the *Life of Burns*, including his *Dissertation on the Scottish Peasantry*, prefixed to the works of that great poet.

If Currie knew little of Burns personally — for he met him but once, and that only for a few minutes in the streets of Dumfries — he was well acquainted with his works, with his genius, and with the Scottish husbandmen, whose passions and manners the poet has so enduringly painted. His learning had not oppressed his natural tastes; his classic knowledge, and love of whatever was elegant, withheld him not from rejoicing in country-bred joys familiar to his boyhood; he entered into the opinions and humors of the clouted shoe with the relish of true love, and without any of that put-on rapture too common to the polished and the polite. He found the papers of Burns in sad confusion, and he reduced them to order; he saw that the character of the poet was open to many objections, and he tried to explain and extenuate; and, with a merciful taste and generous feeling, he sat in judgment upon his looser compositions, and enabled us to taste their spirit without partaking of their licentiousness. His estimate of the genius of Burns was at once bold and candid; he was the first who dared to place the peasant on the highest table-land of poetic genius, and claim a fellowship for him with the great masters of song. This was the more hardy, since scholars and critics were not wanting who regarded his untutored strains as the raw material, rather than the finished commodity of verse; and who said — and this is reported of Home, the author

of Douglas — that he was a meteor, to flash and dazzle, and then pass into darkness for ever.

The judgment of Currie was equal to his taste ; he not only felt the excellence of Burns, but he saw the true way to make his bright pictures of humble life acceptable to the polished and the high-born ; and obeying this, he wrote that first and best of all prose papers on the subject, “ The Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry.” This forms the clearest of all introductions to the poems of Burns ; we see the well-head whence all he has written flows ; it contains pictures which no painter has ever surpassed, and scenes which, for truth and feeling and life, few poets have ever equalled. What is there more vivid than his account of a peasant’s emotions at the sound of his native music ? “ After the labors of the day are over, young men and women walk many miles in the cold and dreary nights of winter, to these dancing-schools ; and the instant that the violin sounds a Scottish air, fatigue seems to vanish, the toil-bent rustic becomes erect, his features brighten with sympathy ; every nerve seems to thrill with sensation, and every artery to vibrate with life.” Of equal truth and beauty is his picture of the rustic lover ; a theme dear to all lovers of Scottish song. “ In the course of his passion a Scottish peasant often exerts a spirit of adventure, of which a Spanish cavalier need not be ashamed. After the labors of the day are over, he sets out for the habitation of his mistress, perhaps at many miles’ distance, regardless of the length or the dreariness of the way. He approaches her in secrecy, under the disguise of night ; a signal at the door or window, perhaps agreed on, and understood by none but her, gives information of his arrival ; and sometimes it is repeated again and again,

before the capricious fair one will obey the summons. But if she favors his addresses, she escapes unobserved, and receives the vows of her lover under the gloom of twilight, or the deeper shades of night." The whole dissertation is one continued picture ; but the hand which delineated it was soon to become cold, like the poet whose works it illustrates : after repeated attacks of a pulmonary complaint, Currie sank to the grave in the fiftieth year of his age, leaving a son, who has done justice to his father's merits in an excellent memoir, and a name which will be dear to Scotland while her language lasts.

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

“O Thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches.”

“I HAVE bought,” says Burns to one of his fair correspondents, “a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship—in that great personage Satan.” Afterwards, to the same lady, but in something of an apologetical mood, he expresses the same opinion of the same terrible personage:—“My favorite feature in Milton’s Satan is his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be remedied—in short, the wild broken fragments of a noble exalted mind in ruins.” In these words, one of his critics, and a not unkindly one, sees the stubborn resolution of Burns—rather to endure with patience the consequences of error, than to own and avoid it in future; but this seems judging too sternly of a man who indulged in inconsiderate sayings, and wrote down the feelings of the moment. Besides, these sentiments were uttered when the poet had been long enough in Edinburgh to perceive that he had little chance of rising, through the sympathy or the justice of those who dispensed the patronage of the

kingdom, above the servile toil and abasing humility of his condition; they must be regarded rather as words forced from Burns by the bitterness of disappointment, than the offspring of a settled purpose of soul.

Yet Satan was a personage on whom his youthful mind often brooded: like a painter contemplating his canvas, or a sculptor his block of marble, he regarded the arch-fiend as a fine subject for the varying colors of his fancy: he thought of him too, like the peasantry of the land, with wonder as well as fear, and now and then with a familiarity less akin to dislike than to good-will. He had heard legends of all hues, and stories of all complexions, in which the fiend, perplexed by the subtle wit of one, and dismayed by the devotional spirit of another, fled from the land; leaving, like Aubrey's ghost, an odor, which no one mistook for frankincense, behind him. He had heard too of sounds in lonely glens, and voices in desert places, and other murmurings of nature, all of which were placed to the dark account of Satan; and out of those discordant and strange materials he proceeded to create a work at once fanciful and original; and so he wrote the "Address to the Deil." Concerning its origin Gilbert Burns says: "It was, I think, in the following winter, 1785, as we were going together for coals to the family fire, (and I could point out the particular spot,) that the author first repeated to me the "Address to the Deil." The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage."

The "Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie," of Burns, is the fiend of the popular belief of the North, rather than a being on whom, like Milton, he lavished the beauty of

form and fortitude of an archangel. He has not indeed painted the horns, hoofs, and tail, with which vulgar fancy has equipped this personation of the principle of evil: he saw that these coarse material things would interrupt the stream of his humor: he has therefore kept them out of sight while he relates his ancient and modern atrocities: and in this he has obeyed popular belief; for though some of the old peasants aver that they have as good as heard him, no one has yet seen Satan face to face. The poet reproaches the Fiend with the ruin which he wrought in Eden in the first moments of new-born love, and with his bitter experiment on the patience of Job; but his happiest touches are those which belong to later experiences:—with what fine seriousness and humor he intimates those of his own house!

“ I’ve heard my reverend graunie say,
 In lancelly glens ye like to stray;
 Or where auld ruined castles gray
 Nod to the moon,
 Ye fright the nightly wanderer’s way,
 Wi’ eldrich croon.

“ When twilight did my graunie summon
 To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
 Aft yont the dyke she’s heard you bummin,
 Wi’ eerie drone,
 Or, rustling, through the boortries comin,
 Wi’ heavy groan.”

To the Spirit of Evil, too, he imputes the squattering and quacking which affrighted himself by a lake side one dreary windy winter night; also the wicked wanderings of warlocks and witches on Halloween, and the refusal of the toiling housewife’s cream to yield its butter, and of “dawtit twal-pint Hawkie” to let down

her milk. Amid all his humor there is seriousness, and with his seriousness there are touches of a tender and relenting nature; of which the concluding verse contains a fine example.

“ But, fare ye weel, auld Nickie-ben !
O wad ye tak a thought an’ men !
Ye aiblins might — I dinna ken —
Still hae a stake —
I’m wae to think upo’ yon den,
Ev’n for your sake !”

BURNS'S INTERVIEW WITH LORD DAER.

“This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third :
A ne’er-to-be-forgotten day,
Sae far I sprackled up the brae —
I dinner’d wi’ a lord !”

IN the hasty and happy little poem, of which these lines form a part, Burns intimates the rustic embarrassment and ludicrous alarm which he experienced when he stood for the first time in the presence of a lord. He lived, however, to overcome these emotions, which perhaps he never seriously felt, and to exclaim with the collier, when he snatched a drink from an earl’s cup, “We’re a’ God’s creatures.” Yet it would appear that the bashfulness which he felt in the presence of Lord Daer returned upon him when, in after life, he visited the noble house of St. Mary’s Isle, for he desired the company of his friend Syme to see him well through an interview which he felt would be embarrassing. Lord Daer lived to be a man, but he did not live to be an earl: had that happened, he might have held out his hand to a Poet whose genius he acknowledged, for he was of a generous nature, and had that love of literature which seems hereditary in the family: we cannot, therefore, class him with the patrons of Burns, of whom we may reckon eight.

1st. John Ballantine, a banker in Ayr: a worthy and

kind gentleman, who, it is said, extended the pecuniary protection of his house to the bard when pressed by demands for which he was not, as a farmer, always prepared. "The Brigs of Ayr," first published in the second edition of his poems, was inscribed to him, and while in the press, he reminds him, in a letter dated 13th December, 1786, how obscure and unknown he was when first honored with his notice.

2d. Gavin Hamilton, of Mauchline, a gentleman of old blood, and a lawyer in good practice; whose door was ever open, and whose table was ever spread for the Poet; and whose skill in his profession, and it was sometimes required in delicate matters, was constantly at his command. He applauded his poems, too, as they were composed, and cheered him onward, when there were few to cheer him in the paths of fame.

3d. Mrs. Stewart, of Stair and Afton, a lady distinguished by the sweetness of her nature and the excellence of her taste, was perhaps one of the first who perceived the Poet's high merit. She overheard, it is said, one of her maids singing a song, quite new to her, and of more than common beauty; and inquired who made it. The girl said it was written by a young man of the name of Burns, whom she now and then saw. "I should like to see him too," said Mrs. Stewart; and accordingly, on his next visit, they were made known to each other. He loved afterwards to talk of the embarrassment which he felt, and of the courtesy and kindness of the Lady,—the Female Form of the "Towers of Stair," mentioned in one of his poems.

4th. Dugald Stewart, the accomplished philosopher, had a seat at Catrine, and here he was to be found when released from his duties in Edinburgh. He took much pleasure in

the Poet's company, and was the entertainer when Burns met Lord Daer at dinner with Mr. Mackenzie. The impression which the Poet's conversation, as well as his vigorous and impassioned verse, made on the philosopher, was not untold in Edinburgh, and smoothed the way for the *éclat* with which he was received into its polished circles.

5th. The Duchess of Gordon, when she opened her doors, and held out her hand to the Poet, did more than many other ladies of rank did; she went farther: she introduced him to her wide circle of friends in the North: she wrote to the South in his favor, and formed parties in which he might exhibit his all but miraculous gifts of conversation to those who had the power, if they had had the inclination, to do him a kindness with the Government.

6th. Mrs. Dunlop, who, charmed in a fit of illness by the exquisite moral truth and beauty of the Cotter's Saturday Night, became from that moment his friend, and endeavored to promote his fortunes. The Poet esteemed her, for she was a poetess; was descended too from a line of heroes, the Wallaces; and was courteous, and tolerant, and kind. He felt the influence of her regard, when others, towards the close of his course, grew estranged or cold.

7th. Henry Mackenzie, the author of the "Man of Feeling;" the first true critic who, in spite of classic predilections, placed Burns on that high eminence afterwards claimed as his inheritance through nature by the accomplished Currie.

8th. James Cunningham, Earl of Glencairn, was no poet, nor has any one said that he was much of a lover of literature. He was, however, good and generous; he took Burns at once by the hand; subscribed largely to

his poems ; introduced him to his own friends, who were numerous, and to the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, a band of the *élite* of Scotchmen, and to whom the Poet inscribed the Edinburgh Edition of his Poems. The Earl died soon afterwards : the title is dormant, and the name has vanished from the northern peerage.

CAPTAIN GROSE.

"I 'm tauld he was a sodger bred,
And ane wad rather fa'n than fled ;
But now he's quat the spurtle blade,
And dog-skin wallet,
And ta'en the — antiquarian trade,
I think they call it."

BURNS met Francis Grose at the Friar's Carse, on the banks of the Nith, the residence of a brother antiquarian, Mr. Riddell, and was pleased with his manners and his wit, and listened alike to his Southland jokes, and his old world lore. It is said, nevertheless, that though they were brothers in humor and in the social cup, the haughty Englishman disliked the Scot's sallies about the rotundity of his person, and was mortified rather than pleased when he found himself described as a "fine, fat, fodge wight," small of stature, though bright in genius. It is likely that the Poet was not ignorant of this ; and hence his jocular epigram, in which he represents Satan as eager for the soul of the antiquary, but dreading to encounter the immense load with which he heard his sick-bed creaking and groaning. Indeed, he seldom omitted an opportunity of having a fling at him ; even in the envelope which enclosed the inimitable Tam o' Shanter to Cardonnel, another of the northern antiquaries, he makes sarcastic inquiries.

"Ken ye ought o' Captain Grose —
Is he drowned in the Forth ?
Or wandered mang the Highland bodies ?
And eaten like a wether haggis ?"

The Poet soon, indeed, discovered that Grose had but little in common with himself: he was a dry-as-dust antiquary, and thought the bard received immortal honor in admitting his tale of 'Tam o' Shanter as an illustration to the ruins of Alloway Kirk. On the other hand, Burns imagined that he helped Grose largely with his task when he advertised his professional visit to the ruined castles and abbeys of Scotland; and no doubt his humorous epistle to his countrymen prepared the way both for Grose and his work on the Scottish Antiquities. In the commencement of this poem, he alarms the national pride :

"Hear, land o' Cakes, and brither Scots,
 Frae Maidenkirk to Johnny Groat's ;
 If there's a hole in a' your coats,
 I rede ye tent it :
 A chield's amang ye takin' notes,
 An' faith he'll prent it."

In the second and third verses he introduces the Captain to his countrymen, and claims their regard to his personal appearance as well as learned qualities :—

"If in your bounds ye chance to light
 Upon a fine, fat, fodgeg wight,
 O' stature short, but genius bright,
 That's he — mark weel —
 And wow ! he has an unco slight
 O' cauk and keel.

"By some auld, howlet-haunted biggin,
 Or kirk deserted by its riggin,
 It's ten to ane ye'll find him snug in
 Some eldrich part,
 Wi' deils, they say, Lord save 's ! colleaguin
 At some black art."

He then calls on those who deal in spells and glamour, and on the spirits which haunt ruined halls, to tremble

and quake at the coming of one who can let day-light in upon their dark doings, and expose and expel them. His account of the antiquarian collection of his friend is in a happy style. Sir Walter Scott, as he conducted a friend of ours, now on the remote Sutledge, through his splendid armory, leant kindly on his shoulder, and repeated, with great unction, the following verse :—

“ He has a fouth o’ auld nick-nackets :
Rusty airn caps and jinglin jackets,
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets,
A towmont guid ;
And parritch pats, and auld saut backets
Afore the flood.”

Grose was a man of perseverance and research ; his work on the military antiquities of Britain will long be a monument to the honor of single-handed enterprise. A work so extensive and minute, so curious and instructive, so worthy of the nation and its history, was to have been looked for from the crown or the government, rather than from a half-pay captain and an antiquary, rich in nick-nackets, rather than in gold. He was born at Richmond, in the year 1730, where his father was a jeweller ; he was for some time in the Herald’s College, served a few years in the militia and the cavalry, and quitting knapsack and sword, distinguished himself as an antiquary, and died suddenly at a dinner-table, in Dublin, in the year 1791.

THE FARMER'S AULD MARE MAGGIE.

“ When thou an’ I were young an’ skeigh
An’ stable meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an’ snore, an’ skreigh,
An’ tak the road !
Town’s bodies ran an’ stood abeigh,
An’ ca’t thee mad.”

ALL the great poets were lovers of horses : Homer has sung their praise in many a lofty line ; nay, he makes some of his favorites of immortal descent, and even endues them with speech : the chariot races of Pindar come to us with the admiration of all antiquity to recommend them ; and the elegant genius of Virgil has done as much for the steeds of Rome as Homer did for those of Greece. To come to our own island poets, the horses of Chaucer’s Canterbury Pilgrimage are all mettle and life ; the ambling palfrey of the merry Wife of Bath seems as skittish as its mistress. Shakspeare sang of them like a groom, a gentleman, a poet, and a knight of romance : those who can forget the Frenchman’s description of his battle-charger in Henry the Fifth, have memories unfit for retaining the glory of true poetry. Scott loved to breast a steed, take perilous leaps, and ford the Tweed and the Yarrow when foaming from bank to brae ; and on more occasions than one seems to lament that the hard-riding days of the Border were past and gone, when, like Moorland Willie, with dirk and pistol at his belt, he might have headed an inroad, or, like the

Scottish moss-trooper, wished that the English hay-stack had but four feet, that he might have driven it home for food to his horses. Nay, when in London, Hogg said the beauty of its horses surpassed the beauty of its women. Burns, a ploughman as well as a poet, knew all the fine points of the animal; in a couplet more witty than decorous, he claims an equal duty from his horse and his mistress: he laments the unexpected death of his bay mare Peg Nicholson, and regrets when he committed her body to the waters of the Nith: he sings, in strains not soon to perish, the rapid flight of Tam o' Shanter's grey mare Meg, and her good fortune in bearing her rider harmless from the pursuit of Nannie with the sark of Paisley harn, over the flooded Doon.

But the finest and most touching of all poems ever dedicated to this noble animal, is Burns's "Auld Farmer's New Year's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie, on giving her his customary rip of corn." The history of Maggie is beautifully interwoven with that of her master. He remembers her when a foal, trotting by the side of her mother, when he first went to woo his bride. As the courtship goes on, Maggie increases in size and beauty: —

"Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank
As' e'er trod yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank
Like ony bird."

She had soon a graceful burden to bear to the young farmer's home:

"That day ye pranced wi' muckle pride,
When ye bare hame my bonnie bride;

An' sweet an' graceful she did ride
 Wi' maiden air!
 Kyle Stewart I could bragged wide
 For sic a pair!"

She was a witness to pleasures also of another kind, and had her share in the toils and glories of her master :

" When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
 We took the road ay like a swallow :
 At Brooses thou had ne'er a fellow
 For pith an' speed ;
 But every tail thou pay't them hollow
 Whare'er thou geed."

Maggie was as clever in the plough as in the race, and feared neither highfield nor holm :

" Thou never braindg't, an' fech't, an' fliskit,
 But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
 An' spread abreed thy weel-filled brisket
 Wi' pith' an' pow'r,
 Till spritty knowes wad rair't an' risket
 An' slypet owre."

She is now grown old : her bones have lost their vigor, her sinews their power, and her hide is as white as a field of gowans ; but her master's affection is strong, and his heart is generous :

" We've worn to crazy years thegither :
 We'll toyte about wi' ane anither :
 Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether
 To some hained rig,
 Where ye may nobly rax your leather
 Wi' sma' fatigue."

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

“The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labor to support
A haughty lordling's pride ;
I've seen yon weary winter sun
Twice forty times return ;
And every time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.”

THE moral of this mournful dirge applies to the present and to the future : to the present, for too many men feel the unjust division of honors and wealth ; and to the future, for if the millions who suffer under the crushing inequality of their condition were not withheld by the hope of a happier hereafter, they would arise and rend their oppressors to pieces. That the lot of man, though meant by God to be cheerful, was eminently unhappy through injustice and wrong, was a sentiment which pressed, we are told, strongly on the mind of Burns. He used to remark to his brother, that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life, than a man seeking work — a sight which he could not fail frequently to see. His favorite Young might have taught him that other sights were equally sorrowful : one of them may be named — the maimed soldier, who

“Begg bitter bread through realms his valor saved.”

And his own life furnished a still bitterer ; one of the noblest of our poets expiring in neglect and want.

Burns felt that his merits gave him a claim on those who dispensed the extensive patronage of the empire; and his haughty spirit could ill brook the humility of asking as a favor what he justly regarded as his right — and worse still the civil denial, or the cold and insulting silence — the general result of the applications of genius. He might indeed have learnt from the priest and poet already referred to, that he had none of the peace-offerings which those who rise in court-favor often make — to whom

“A beauteous sister, or convenient wife,
Are prizes in the lottery of life.”

While feelings such as these gave life and energy to this fine dirge, an old ballad had a share in the moral beauty of the composition. “I had an old grand-uncle,” says Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, “with whom my mother lived while in her girlish years. The good old man was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit and cry while my mother would sing the simple old song of ‘The Life and Age of Man.’” Cromek, when he edited the Reliques of Burns, copied this ballad from the recitation of the Poet’s venerable mother; corrected her version by the light which a stall copy afforded, which he chanced to pick up in Kilmarnock; and published the result in the preface to his Select Scottish Songs; a work little known.

To this old puritanic strain Burns was more indebted than he has anywhere admitted: not only did he catch from it the moral complexion of his dirge, but he adopted some of its sentiments, and by a slight change converted he exclamation “Man was made to moan” into the title of his own poem. The old and pious minstrel says, “Upon the sixteenth hundred year of God and fifty-three, on the sixteenth day of January, as I lay lonely, I cried out with

many a sob, ah ! man was made to moan !” On this, the voice of Nature reminded him, that the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air lived but for a moment, and then perished for ever ; while man, though born to hardship and sorrow, suffered, only to make enjoyment the sweeter, and died that he might live in perpetual happiness and glory. This exordium induced the minstrel to listen to the farther remonstrance of his monitress, who first compared the life of man to the twelve months of the year, and then proceeded to give a picture of the individual months, with the corresponding human portrait. Some of these delineations are clever —

“ Then on comes March, that noble arch,
 With wholesome spring and air,
 The child doth spring to years fifteen,
 With visage fine and fair ;
 So do the flowers, with softening showers,
 Aye spring up as we see ;
 Yet nevertheless remember this,
 That one day we must die.”

That of May, the season of singing birds, is in the same mood. We can only find room for the images which June suggests.

“ Then cometh June with pleasant tune,
 When fields with flowers are clad,
 And Phœbus bright is at his height :
 All creatures then are glad.
 Then he appears of thretty years
 With courage bold and stout :
 His nature so makes him to go,
 Of Death he hath no doubt.”

This, after all, is but a bald ballad version of Shakspeare's incomparable *Seven Ages of Man*, and prodigiously inferior to the strain which it seems to have inspired.

A WINTER NIGHT.

“ Perhaps, this hour, in Misery’s squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother’s fears shrinks at the rocking blast !”

Of the four seasons, Winter has been the favorite with our descriptive poets. Thomson reversed the order of nature, to begin with that period of the year the most congenial to his mind.

“ Welcome, kindred glooms !
Congenial horrors, hail !”

His first attempts in verse were short winter pieces. It was so with Burns,—sorrow, when young, gave a melancholy turn to his thoughts and induced him to prefer the sublime melancholy of a wintry waste to all the gayety of the rest of the year.

“ The tempests howl : it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join ;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine.”

There is something in a hilly country,—for Thomson and Burns were of the land of mountain and flood,—that calls forth contemplation in the winter season. All nature is laid bare, the hills and fields are covered with snow, the pools with ice, and the mountain-streams are swollen to twenty times their summer size, and come roaring from linn to linn, from bank to brae, with headlong impetuosity. All out-door occupation is at an end ; the redbreast seeks the society of man ; the hare, so timid

and so fearful, forsakes its favorite haunts, and steals its cold meal from the kale-yard of the cotter. The doors are barred on the storm without, and the Christmas log placed on the clear blazing fire. This is the season for reflection. "I know of no subject," says Thomson, "more elevating, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of nature." "There is scarcely any earthly object," says Burns, "gives me more, — I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me, — than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, on a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion : my mind is wrapped up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.' "

In this his favorite season for serious reflection, he composed "A Winter Night." "As I lay," he says,

"Listening, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' wintry war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scaur.

"Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing !
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,

What comes o' thee ?
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e ?"

In this reverie he fancies "a voice" near him, likening the ungenial weather to the love which man bears to his

fellow-man. "Look," says this visitant, "and see how pampered luxury eyes the simple cotter as a creature of another kind, and of a coarser substance than himself. See how common it is for the titled great to make maiden innocence a prey, and turn regardless from her tears,

"Perhaps, this hour, in Misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!"

Much of this poem is similar in sentiment to the following noble passage in Thomson:—

"Ah, little think the gay, licentious, proud,
Whom pleasure, power, and affluence surround;
They, who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,
And wanton, often cruel, riot waste;
Ah little think they, while they dance along,
How many feel, this very moment, death
And all the sad variety of pain.
How many pine in want and dungeon glooms;
Shut from the common air, and common use
Of their own limbs. How many drink the cup
Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter bread
Of misery. Sore pierced by wintry winds,
How many shrink into the sordid hut
Of cheerless poverty. How many stand
Around the death-bed of their dearest friends,
And point the parting anguish. Thought fond man
Of these, and all the thousand nameless ills,
That one incessant struggle render life,
One scene of toil, of suffering, and of fate,
Vice in his high career would stand appall'd
And heedless rambling impulse learn to think!"

After this who will not come to the conclusion that the Poet came to, when the voice on the Winter Night was heard no more:

"The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God."

SIC A WIFE AS WILLIE HAD.

“Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
The place they ca’d it Linkum-doddie,
Willie was a wabster gude,
Cou’d stown a clue wi’ onie bodie ;
He had a wife was dour an’ din,
O Tinkler Madgie was her mither ;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.”

BETWEEN the beauty of the heroines of the songs of Burns, and the beauty of the scenes in which they lived, there is a close resemblance : the fine portrait has as fine a frame. This could not be well otherwise than accidental : the poet, unlike the landscape painter, did not seek out an agreeable scene, and then look round for a lady to give life to its inanimate beauty. However this may have happened, the fact is so ; and the opinion of an old dame on Nithsdale, respecting one of his songs, applies to them generally. “If ye wish to feel the full beauty of the Lassie wi’ the lint-white Locks, go and sing the sangs to her praise in Craigieburn Wood, and among the yellow broom of Kemmis-Hall.” In like manner, the loveliness of the Lass of Ballochmyle is better felt in the scene on the Ayr, where the poet first saw her : all the charms of Euphemia Murray return in Glenturit : we feel the full enchantment of Charlotte Hamilton, on the banks of the Devon : the Blue-eyed Lass steals our souls away nowhere so sweetly as among the Lakes of old Lochmaben ; and if we desire to see the fair Phillis in her

native lustre, let us go to the groves and towers of Drumlanrig. All these scenes are worthy of the beauty of their heroines : the scene where the wife of Willie Wastle dwalt, is also in keeping with one

“ Whose face wad fyle the Logan water.”

This song was written while Burns lived at Ellisland ; and though he has carried the scene to the banks of the Tweed, and made the unlucky hero a weaver, yet tradition says, the unlovesome dame who supplied the portrait, was the wife of a neighboring farmer well to do in the world. The little group of straw-thatched houses of which Willie was the occupier seemed unfit for the accommodation of a litter of pigs ; they stood in a small hollow ; in summer they were covered with dust, and in winter half hidden in snow, or half drowned in mud ; while the wife, with a long nose, a long beard and long nails, and a visage seldom washed—though a little stream provoking her to ablution trotted within a penny-stone throw of her threshold—might be seen busied with her pigs and her dairy, both of which she kept tidy and clean. She was quite a character, and a proverb for oddity in the district. Her notions as well as her looks were singular : china and earthenware, she said, were the ruin of a house, and Scotland was never Scotland since timber dishes went out of fashion ; tea she abominated, and to the use of it ascribed the bankruptcy of a neighbor ; wheaten-bread, she was proud to say, had never passed her lips ; farmers had never been farmers since they quitted their saddles of plaited straw, for those of polished leather ; and lasses had grown light in the head, and indeed light every way, since they had put fowls' feathers into their riggins. Thus

she would sit for hours, maundering to all who would listen about the follies and frivolities of the land ; and so glad was she to obtain an audience, that, though the first of misers, she would bribe a listener with a basin of curds and cream, which she well knew how to prepare.

The writer of this was some eleven years old, when a message, of which he was the not unwilling bearer, carried him to the fireside of this strange old dame. She was sitting spinning, half shrouded in the smoke of a hearth fire, which, before it attempted to escape at a narrow aperture in the roof, eddied round and round, filling the whole house, and staining roof and rafter as black as polished ebony. She received me kindly ; seated me close to the fire, for there she said the smoke was least inconvenient for young een like mine ; and then proceeded to make for me a basin of curds and cream. This took some time. Such was the awe with which she had inspired me, that I had not yet ventured to look her in the face ; but sat eyeing the eddying of the cough-provoking reek, or looking at her cat, her wheel, and the old and curiously carved chair on which she usually sat. At last, when she put a little round table, with a basin of curds and cream, before me, and placed a spoon in my hand, I looked up, and the sight I saw I shall never forget : the “whiskin beard” recorded by the poet, a full finger’s-length at least, gray and straggling, depended from lip and chin, and all but touched my shoulder ; while her withered cheeks, seamed brows, and gray glimmering eyes, at once confirmed to me the suspicion of witchcraft with which the fears of her neighbors honored her. I held the spoon filled with reeking curds within an inch of my mouth, while my parted lips and wondering eyes bore

witness to the amazement with which for the first time I beheld a bearded woman. Her brow darkened for a moment—she turned away, bût soon began to smile, and often said of me afterwards, “Yon’s a queer callant, a queer callant !”

THE SPIRITS OF THE BRIGS OF AYR.

“That bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the spiritual folk :
Fays, spunkies, kelpies, a', they can explain them,
And even the vera deils, they brawly ken them.”

BURNS seldom saw visions, or pretended to intercourse with the spiritual world ; but when it was his pleasure to see fairies dance, witches ride, or goblins in the glimpses of the moon, he could delineate them with a force and brilliancy, equal to any painter of the shadowy children of fancy. His sublime “Vision,” his song of “Liberty,” his “Tam-o-Shanter,” and his “Brigs of Ayr,” bear evidence both of his imagination and skill. To make the spirits who preside over masonry, ancient and modern, engage in angry conversation, was indeed not new : Ferguson had done the same for the Plainstones and Causeway of Edinburgh ; and other poets, of classic as well as Gothic times, indulged in fictions equally startling and unexpected. But the merit of the “Brigs of Ayr,” lies less in the conception than in the handling ; and here the bard of the country excels the poet of the town. Ferguson says, that one night, while the lamps of Edinburgh expired for want of oil, and all the Highland watchmen were asleep, a wandering cadie, or porter, happened to overhear a sharp dialogue, in the shape of a complaint, between the footway and carriage-way ; and reported it to the Poet. Burns heard the controversy

between the Auld Brig and the New with his own ears, and saw with his own eyes the splendid vision whose appearance silenced the debate.

In the satiric poem of Ferguson, there is some of that sly quiet humor in which he excelled. "Is it not," said the Plainstones, "a sad thing, that my smooth and level surface, made to bear the handsome feet of dames of condition, and men of birth and rank, should be defaced by the heavy hob-nailed shoes of dirty mechanics, and the rude tramp of Highland chairmen; while the ladies, who delight to come glittering along in silk and scarlet, are jostled by mealy bakers, dusty masons, and dirty makers of wigs?" "Friend!" said the Causeway, "you complain with little reason: what are the shoes of mechanics to those of horses or the wheels of carts and waggons loaded with coals and stone? I wish that a tipsy coachman would lash his horses, and set his iron wheels a spinning upon you: then there would be reason in your complaint." "Fool! thy back is made for the burthen," replied the Plainstones: "what, save wheels of iron, and horses rough-shod, would venture upon thy path of whinstone? You were made for the tear and wear of waggon-wheels, and horses' feet: but I was intended to bear the gentle tread of rosy lasses with children in their arms; and respectable and ancient burghers, when they take the morning air." In conclusion, they agree to present a calm and temperate petition of grievances to the Town Council.

The poem of the Twa Brigs begins in a loftier mood; and, according to the practice of Burns, says something about himself:

"The simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from every bough;

The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green-thorn bush :
The soaring lark, the perching redbreast shrill,
Or deep-toned plovers, gray wild-whistling o'er the hill ;
Shall he, nursed in the Peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy Independence bravely bred,
By early Poverty to hardship steeled,
And trained to arms in stern Misfortune's field,
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes ?"

Having protested against the imputation of Swiss servility, which his dedication of this poem to Ballantyne of Ayr might excite, he proceeds with the subject. "It happened in that season," he says, "when grain is secured in the stack-yard, potatoes are covered in from frost, and the bees, rejoicing over their summer spoils, are doomed to be smothered, like devils, with brimstone ; that by whim inspired, or pressed with care, I left my bed, and sauntering aimless along the street, was on a sudden startled by the 'clanging sigh' of wings, and the voices of the Spirits who preside over the old and new brigs of Ayr." One examined, with anxious care, the time-flawed and crumbling arches of the old ; the other fluttered over the rising piers of the new ; when eyeing one another with more of envy and scorn than of goodwill, they plunged at once into a bitter and well-sustained controversy on the merits of Gothic and Grecian architecture, and the virtue and wisdom of the citizens of Ayr, of the ancient and latter times. To this keen encounter of wits we have already alluded, when speaking of those structures : how it might have ended, the Poet confesses his inability to guess : it was interrupted, if not extinguished, by a procession of bright figures, advancing to the sound of music along the bosom of the stream. On this vision both the Spirits and

the Poet gazed : among the figures, he beheld the forms of the chiefs of the district—the Stewarts, the Montgomeries, the Cunninghams and Ballantynes ; they moved solemnly ; the infant ice of the stream scarce bent beneath their feet : Peace and Industry accompanied them. On this, the Spirits of the Twa Brigs forgot their wrath, in astonishment at the sight of shapes nobler and sublimer than themselves.

WITCHES' DANCE IN TAM O'SHANTER.

“ While Tammie glower'd, amazed and curious,
The noise and fun grew fast and furious :
The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew.”

THE old woman, Jenny Wilson by name, who initiated the boy Burns into the mystery of wraiths, death-lights, elf-candles, spunkies, water-kelpies, fairies, elves, ghosts, warlocks and witches, did a kind turn to all, and they cannot be few, who admire the inimitable tale of 'Tam o' Shanter. Her schooling prepared him for the task ; and we only regret that he did not live long enough to employ his fine genius on other traditions, with which his native land abounds. As we have, in the article on Cooper's escape of Tam from Nannie, spoken of the origin of the tale, and of the place and circumstances under which it was composed, we shall content ourselves with mentioning two other traditions of the North, for the use of some future poet of the Ayr, the Tweed, or the Nith.

A farmer's wife in Nithsdale, “ word gaed she was na' cannie,” had two servant lads, who ploughed on the same grounds, ate at the same table, and slept in the same bed. Now one was lean and haggard, the other was fat and fair ; and one night as they went to bed, they began to talk about their looks. “ Why Tam, man,” said Rob, “ you are as lean as a flail, and as melancholy as a hill-preacher : I can see the lamp-light through your cheeks. What in all the world's the matter with you ? ” “ O Rob,

man," replied the other, "ye wad na' believe me an' I were to tell you : but just lie at the bedstock as I do, and ye'll soon find out why I am lean and sad." They changed places ; and still and watchful lay Rob, resolved to solve the mystery for himself. All became quiet : ten o'clock struck, and eleven o'clock warned. Rob thought the ticking of his watch louder than usual, and that the cheap of a mouse was as loud as the squeak of a rat : at last, slumber began to steal upon him, and with slumber the farmer's wife came, shook in a moment an enchanted bridle over his head, uttered a word which he luckily remembered, and lo ! to his own utter astonishment, he became a horse, was bridled and mounted in a breath, and urged on the way to Locher-brig-hill, as fast as a witch and a switch could drive him. Rob was not sure of his transformation till he saw his shadow in Locher-brook, nor of the person of his rider till she leaped down from his back, hooked his bridle on the snag of an oak, and, smiling on him, hastened to the trysting place, where Satan on that night had summoned a meeting of all the witches of Nithsdale.

Poor Rob disliked his transformation ; and to be ridden to the devil by a witch ! he prayed inwardly, renounced all sins to which he felt himself inclined, formed pious resolutions, and all the while toiled and twisted to remove the enchanted bridle from his head. He succeeded in this at last, resumed his own shape, and, waiting behind the oak till his mistress returned, shook the bridle over her head, and spoke the word of gramary : she became on a sudden a gray mare ! Rob sprung on her back, and switched her sharply, till day began to dawn ; when, turning her head towards a smith's forge, he muttered, "I shall have this bonny creature shod." But she looked so

beseechingly at him, that he lighted down, and removed the curb : before he restored her, however, to her own shape, he bargained for a softer bed and an increase of wages. It is added by some, that Rob kept the bridle, that his mistress grew devout, and when her husband died, married him.

The second story has been briefly related by Sir Walter Scott : in his version, he makes Thomas the Rhymer the hero ; but this post, in the Nithsdale tradition, is more appropriately filled by Michael Scott the Magician. There are other differences. A horse-dealer, it is said, was returning late one night from a border-fair with a fine young black horse, unsold ; when a stranger, accosting him, offered his price at once, saying, " Come with me now to the foot of that hill, and I will pay you." The dealer gazed on his customer, a tall old man with a beard as white as snow, who led the way : and when they came to the hill, the hill opened, and they entered through a lofty gateway, into a vaulted palace, which seemed hewn out of the solid rock, and was lighted by innumerable lamps. The old man paid the price of the horse in the old coin of Scotland, and then bade him step forward, and look how his horse was stabled. He took a step, and saw, to his astonishment, rank succeeding rank of black horses, all saddled and bridled, while an armed warrior lay motionless at each charger's feet. " These," said he, " are all Michael Scott's men, and they will awaken when great peril comes upon Scotland : but they will not move till some one comes who can draw that sword, and blow that horn, which you see hanging on the column." On this, the horse-dealer, strengthened by the brandy which he had drunk at the fair, stepped forward, seized the sword but could not draw it, then snatched the horn and

tried to wind it : all he produced was a faint and feeble sound ; but the horses stamped and neighed, the warriors half-started up, and shook their swords ; and as Sir Michael Scott—for it was the magician himself—exclaimed, “ Woe to those who blow the horn before they draw the sword ! ” a tempest of wind swept the audacious horse-dealer out of the palace, and he was found half-dead, or half-drunk, next morning, on the road between Dumfries and Lockerby.

CORA LYNN.

THE time I saw thee, Cora, last,
'Twas with congenial friends ;
And calmer hours of pleasure past
My memory seldom sends.

It was as sweet an Autumn day
As ever shone on Clyde ;
And Lanark's orchards all the way
Put forth their golden pride.

Ev'n hedges, busk'd in bravery,
Look'd rich that sunny morn ;
The scarlet hip and blackberry
So prank'd September's thorn.—

In Cora's glen the calm how deep !
Its trees on loftiest hill
Like statues stood, or things asleep,
All motionless and still.

The torrent spoke as if his noise
Bade earth be quiet round,
And give his loud and lonely voice
A more commanding sound.

His foam, beneath the yellow light
Of noon, came down like one
Continuous sheet of jaspers bright,
Emblazon'd by the sun.

Dear Lynn ! let loftier falling floods
Have prouder names than thine,
And king of all, enthron'd in woods,
Let Niagara shine.

Barbarian, let him shake his coasts
 With reeking thunders far,
 Extended as th' array of hosts
 In broad embattled war.

His voice appals the wilderness :
 Approaching thine, we feel
 A solemn, deep melodiousness,
 That needs no louder peal.

More fury would but disenchant
 Thy dream-inspiring din :
 Be thou the Scottish muse's haunt,
 Romantic Cora Lynn !

T. CAMPBELL.

The three falls of the river Clyde, so greatly enhanced by the beauty of the surrounding scenery, are objects of never-failing attraction. That of Cora Lynn is pre-eminently so. Here the volume of water is not precipitated in one continuous sheet, as at Bonnington, but is dashed from one shelving rock to another, so as to form three distinct leaps, but which, when the river is full, are nearly imperceptible. Nothing can surpass the striking and stupendous appearance of this cascade. The natural scenery presents a magnificent picture of gigantic crags and hanging woods, and never fails to inspire the traveller with surprise and delight. On a rock immediately aboye the fall, stand the ruins of Cora Castle ; and on a lower ledge is seen a mill, driven by the stream, which, at the verge of its desperate plunge, is thus converted to the use of man.

The Scotch are proud of their rivers, and speak of them with affection. Nor are their merits unsung : the Clyde, the Tweed, the Yarrow, the Doon, the Forth, and the Nith, run musical in many a lyric strain. High poets, too, have been born on their banks, or have lived in their

vales : Campbell, Wilson, Grahame and Lockhart, with others scarcely less eminent, belong to the district of the Clyde : Allan Ramsay, too, the

“ Far-famed and celebrated Allan ”

of every Scotchman’s Gentle Shepherd, was born, as he sings, on one of its tributary streams :

“ Of Crawford-Muir, born on Leadhill,
Where mineral springs Glengonar fill,
Which joins sweet flowing Clyde,
Between auld Crawford-Lindsay’s towers
And where Deneetne rapid pours
His stream through Glotta’s tide :
Native of Clydesdale’s upper ward,
Bred fifteen summers there ;
Though to my loss I’m no a laird,
By birth my title’s fair.”

Burns, the highest of them all, may be said to have belonged to the Clyde, since he was of the western land. But it is not alone in grand poetry, splendid scenery, or high men, that the river which throws itself over the Lynn of Cora is pre-eminent, and surpasses those famous streams of classic lands,

“ Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold ; ”

the Clyde gives motion to a splendid series of machines which bring bread to the hungry, and wealth to the industrious, and spread their valuable and elegant productions over all the earth.

ADDRESS TO THE TOOTH-ACHE.

“ When fevers burn, or ague freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or cholic squeezes,
Our neighbors’ sympathy may ease us
 Wi’ pitying moan :
But Thee ! — thou hell o’ a’ diseases,
 Aye mocks our groan.”

If there be truth in song, some of our highest poets have endured in their own persons the “venomed stang” of the tooth-ache. Shakspeare often alludes to it : Iago, to obtain credence from the Moor for his wild account of Desdemona’s impurity, pretends that he overheard Cassio’s unconscious confession, while kept awake by the torment of a raging tooth. He knew, too, how difficult it was to be endured, for he says —

“ There never yet was the philosopher
That could endure the tooth-ache patiently,
However at their ease they talked like gods.”

Nor was he without some suspicion of its cause, for he makes one of his characters exclaim —

“ What ! sigh for the tooth-ache,
Which is at worst an humor or a worm !”

Webster, a dramatist of the palmy days of the drama, makes Bosola, in the *Duchess of Malfi*, say, “Princes’ images on their tombs do not lie as they were wont, seeming to pray up to heaven ; but with their hands on their cheeks, as if they died of the tooth-ache.” If the

poet knew, personally, that the warm palm pressed on the troubled cheek brought some relief, it would seem from the following passage in the same sad drama, that he had experienced that respite from pain, which the sight of the surgeon and his instruments sometimes brings. When Bosola and the Cardinal are expiring beside him, Ferdinand exclaims, "You're brave fellows! Cæsar died in the arms of prosperity, — Pompey at the feet of disgrace, — but you die in the field! The pain's nothing! pain is many times taken away with the apprehension of greater; as an aching tooth, with the sight of the barber that comes to pull it out."

But perhaps no poet that ever suffered from this fierce disorder, sang of it with the truth and energy of Burns. That he suffered, his rhymes sufficiently prove: we have however his testimony in prose, delivered in a letter to his bookseller Creech, and written at Ellisland, on the 30th of May, 1789. "I had intended," he says, "to have troubled you with a long letter, but at present the delightful sensations of the omnipotent tooth-ache so engross all my inner man, as to put it out of my power even to write nonsense. However, as in duty bound, I approach you my bookseller with an offering in my hand—a few poetic clinches and a song. I do not pretend that there is much merit in these *morceaux*; but I have two reasons for sending them: *primo*, they are mostly ill-natured, so are in unison with my present feelings, when fifty troops of infernal spirits are driving past from ear to ear along my jaw-bones."

While enduring, and it is said with little patience, the pangs which he has so well described in these pithy words, he tried if the music of verse would charm away the demons that tormented him, and so poured out his

“ Address to the Tooth-ache.” That no one sympathizes with the sufferer from this disorder, but that spectators enjoy with a sort of grave chuckle the visible pangs of the victim, the poet was aware, and says so : but even this inclination to moderate mirth was not to be enjoyed by his household : his half ludicrous agony forbade it :

“ Adown my beard the slavers trickle !
 I kick the wee stools o’er the mickle,
 As round the fire the giglets keckle,
 To see me loup ;
 While raving mad, I wish a heckle
 Were in their doup.”

When the giggling lasses of the establishment fled from his presence, and the evil spirits moved along his jaws at a more charitable pace, tranquil thoughts arose, and reflection came and enabled him to sum up the full amount of his misery.

“ Of a’ the num’rous human dools
 Ill har’sts, daft bargains, cutty-stools,
 Or worthy friends raked i’ the mools,
 Sad sight to see !
 The tricks o’ knaves, the fash o’ fools —
 Thou bear’st the gree.”

Nor was it in this world alone that the poet claimed pre-eminence for the disorder which annoyed him : he exclaims, with a bitter irreverence, —

“ Where’er that place be priests ca’ hell,
 Whence a’ the tones o’ misery yell,
 And ranked plagues their numbers tell
 In dreadfu’ raw,
 Thou, Tooth-ache ! surely bear’st the bell
 Amang them a’.”

Having sung his worst of his tormentor, he concludes his

rhyme by crying patriotically out, "O thou grim maker of mischief, that spreadest discord among nations, till men walk to the shoe-mouths in blood — hear me

"Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal
A towmond's Tooth-ache!"

GREEN GROW THE RASHES, O !

“ Green grow the rashes, O !
Green grow the rashes, O !
The sweetest hours that e’er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses, O ! ”

THIS fine song, the crowning glory of all lyrical eulogium on woman, first appeared in the Edinburgh edition of the Poet’s works, published in 1787. This circumstance has induced one of our young antiquaries to surmise, that a strain of such transcendant beauty was inspired by the looks of many, rather than by the graces of one : and that its origin is to be sought in the united charms of our high-born dames, displayed for the first time to the admiring eyes of the bard in the balls and parties of Edinburgh. This ingenious supposition is, however, shadowy : “ Green grow the Rashes ” was written at Mossgiel, in the month of August in the year 1784 ; and was probably omitted in the Kilmarnock edition, from a fear that the daring compliment to woman in the last verse might give offence. That some reckoned it profane, I remember : among other death-bed sayings imputed to the Poet, was one expressing contrition for having said, that “ Nature swore the lasses were her most perfect works, for she tried her ’prentice-hand on man before she made them.” And this was just as true as the assertion, which I am concerned to say was made from a pulpit, that God showed his wrath with that profane poet Burns, by sending “ thunder, lightning and

rain" to attend him to the grave! The rich incense of this strain was not, therefore, offered at the shrine of high-born beauty by a poet pruned and starched and perfumed to fit him for the service, but by a hamely, hearty, country hind, fresh from the plough, inspired only by the charms of the bonnie lasses around him.

In the common-place book where "Green grow the Rashes" was written, the Poet ushered in the song by a curious dissertation on young men, whom he divided into two grand classes, the Grave and the Gay. "The Grave I shall cast," said he, "into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The Gay, are the jovial lads who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action, but without much deliberation follow the strong impulses of nature—the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular *he*, who with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity: but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others: and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are generally those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacies of feeling. The following fragment, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable anybody to determine which of the classes I belong to."

This is all the Poet has recorded of this song—one of the earliest, as well as one of the best, of his lyric compositions. An old free strain supplied the first line of the chorus; the bard's experience added the rest. With

the first three verses some rhymers would have been satisfied, since woman is preferred to riches and rank; but Burns, who was well read in Scripture, cited the authority of Solomon to satisfy or silence the scruples of the grave and devout; and then concluded with the verse which will be said or sung as long as woman has charms, and man has taste.

“ And nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O ;
Her 'prentice-han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.”

The perfect originality of this fine stanza has been called in question, and both prose and verse have been quoted, written before Burns was born, to show that he was a plagiarist. But the volumes in which these passages are found are too rare and curious to have come within the reach of a ploughman lad; and the resemblance, though remarkable, cannot have been otherwise than accidental. Arbuthnot, a grave Reformer, and principal of Aberdeen College, approaches the sentiment in one of his poems—

“ When God made all of nought,
He did this weel declare:
The last thing that he wrought,
It was one woman fair.”

“ Cupid's Whirligig,” published in 1607, contains the sentiment almost in the words of Burns. “ O woman, were we not born of you! should we not then humor you! Nursed by you, and not regard you! Made for you, and not seek you! And since we were made before you, should we not admire you as the last, and therefore perfect work of nature? Man was made when nature

was but an apprentice; but woman, when she was a skilful mistress of her art." It is not at all likely that Burns ever heard of "Cupid's Whirligig;" his lines are more pregnant with meaning, more emphatic and forcible, and it is likely were suggested by the Bible — a fountain overflowing with high thought and poetic impulses.

HUSBAND, HUSBAND, CEASE YOUR STRIFE.

"If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience ;
I'll desert my sovereign lord,
And so good bye allegiance."

IN a little house, in a little lane called Mill-hole-brae, then fragrant with the effluvia of tan-pits, but since widened, and purified, and called Burns Street, the Poet, in December, 1793, composed this little humorous lyric. But whether he made it while balancing himself, according to custom, on the hind legs of his chair, or on that little spot of greensward near the Martington-ford, where he loved to muse, is less certain than that it is a Dumfries lyric, and written for the great work of George Thomson, then in progress of publication. The air to which it was composed is "My Jo Janet," and moreover the song itself is an imitation of the dramatic style of that old and humorous composition. For some of the sentiments he seems indebted to one or more sallies of the eldern muse : he regretted that he had not sooner turned his thoughts to songs of a conversational kind.

This song extends to four verses, and husband and wife divide each verse between them in calm sarcastic altercation. "Cease your strife," Nancy exclaimed; "though I am your wife, I am not your slave." "One of us must obey," replied the husband; "should it be man or

woman?" "O sir, said she, "if you hint at service and submission as my sovereign lord, good bye to my allegiance." "It will be indeed a sad thing to be bereft of you, my spouse," sighed the husband; "yet I'll try and make a shift."

"My poor heart then break it must,
 My last hour I'm near it:
 When you lay me in the dust,
 Think, think how you will bear it."
 "I will hope and trust in Heaven,
 Nancy, Nancy;
 Strength to bear it will be given,
 My spouse, Nancy."

"Well, Sir, from the silent dead,
 Still I'll try to daunt you:
 Ever round your midnight-bed
 Horrid sprites shall haunt you."
 "I'll wed another like my dear
 Nancy, Nancy;
 Then all hell will fly for fear,
 My spouse, Nancy."

Strife of this kind is the theme of many a Scottish song. In "The Auld Gudeman," the strain is lively and dramatic; the woman complains of pleasures lost by the death of her first husband, and of sorrows wedded in the person of the second.

"My heart alake is like to break
 When I think on my winsome John,
 His blinkin e'e and gait sae free
 Was never like thee, thou dosend drone.
 His rosie face, and flaxen hair,
 And skin as white as ony swan,
 He was fair and tall an' comely withal —
 Thou'lt never be like my auld gudeman."

To this sharp reproach the puzzled husband modestly makes answer:—

" Why dost thou pleen, I thee maintain,
 For meal and maut thou disna' want,
 But thy wild bees I canna' please
 Now when our cash 'gins to grow scant.
 Of household stuff thou hast enough,
 Thou wants for neither pot nor pan:
 Of sic like ware he left thee bare,
 Sae tell na' mair o' thy auld gudeman."

" Tell na' mair o' him !" exclaimed the virago in wrath ;
 " well may I tell of him, and think of the blyth nights we
 have had together : but you ! you fold your feet and fall
 asleep : ah ! you will never be like my auld gudeman."

The man fled, and the woman won the field. The " Carle
 of Kellyburn braes," is another song of matrimonial
 infelicity. The devil, says the lyrist, came one day to the
 Carle, saluted him, and inquired how he did. " I have no
 other complaint," said he " but a bad wife—for if you
 can match her, you are worse than you are called." " I
 shall try her," replied Satan ; and taking the wife on his
 back carried her at once into his own dominions ; but she
 scolded one fiend, cuffed a second, and kicked a third, till
 the bottomless pit in full conclave resolved to eject her.
 Their united wish was thus communicated to Lucifer :

" A reeket wee devil glower'd owre the wa',
 Cries Help, master, Help, or she'll ruin us a'."

Satan instantly carried her back to upper air. He found
 the husband holding the plough, and in a philosophic
 mood —

" For ay as the auld carle ranted and sang,
 ' In trowth my auld spunkie, ye'll no keep her lang.' "

" Here, man, take her back," exclaimed the fiend ; " thank
 Heaven I'm not so ill off as you are—I'm only damned,
 I'm not married."

THE BANKS OF DOON.

“Oft have I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine ;
And ilka bird sang o’ its luvie,
And fondly sae did I o’ mine.”

THIS scene on the Doon lies in the Land of Burns, and continues to be frequented by poetic pilgrims, who love to look on the chief places consecrated by his muse. The river is but small, and its course is short: it rises in Lóch Enoch, on the borders of Kirkcudbright-shire, and in the neighborhood of the sources of other little, and scarcely less celebrated streams — the Dee, the Nith, the Girvan, the Stinchar, and the Cree. It obtains waters from the lakes of Ricar and the Star; forms the lake of Doon, a sheet of fair water seven miles long; passes the castle of Ralloch, the village of Damellinton, Cassillis-banks, celebrated in song, and Auchendrane, renowned in tragedy; and finds its way by Alloway’s auld haunted kirk, and Doonholm, where the poet’s father dwelt, to the sea, some two miles or so from the town of Ayr. Of the Doon, few had heard till the songs of Burns gave it the fame of verse, and recorded its beauties in a music even sweeter than its own.

In his Elegy on Poor Mailie, the Poet calls on the “Bards of bonnie Doon” to join in the melancholious sound of his reed, to the honor of his favorite; and in the Epistle to William Simpson of Ochiltree, he complains that while the Forth and the Tay, the Tweed and

the Yarrow, are renowned in song, the Irvine, the Lugar, the Ayr, and the Doon, are unheard of and neglected, and asserts his determination to make them "shine yet with the best." To those who are familiar with the poetry of Burns, we need not say that his allusions to the Doon are frequent: when swollen with rains, and roused from its inland lakes, it is one of the many images of terror which he throws in the way of the heroic Tam o' Shanter:

"Before him Doon pours all her floods,"

and pours them in vain. Perhaps the tenderest notice which his muse has taken of the stream, is in that pathetic strain beginning,

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,"

in which he has intimated the melancholy story of the beautiful Miss Kennedy: a domestic drama, in which the faith and the baseness of the human character come out in full light and darkness. It is now from a nameless stream become one of renown: it is allied with some of the sweetest verses ever measured out to music; let not therefore the obscurity of any stream be a matter of complaint, since a ray of perpetual light may be dropped upon it. Wordsworth truly and finely says,

"For great and sacred is the modest claim
Of streams to nature's love where'er they flow:
And ne'er did genius slight them as they go,
Tree, flow'r and green herb, feeding without blame.
But praise can waste her voice on works of tears,
Anguish and death: full oft where innocent blood
Has mixed its current with the limpid flood,
Her heaven-offending trophy Glory rears."

Though both the muse and mind of Burns belong to the present rather than the past, the sound and sight of the

Doon called up historic recollections of days when Wallace conquered on its banks, and Bruce "shook his Carrick spear." Yet he loved the present most; and its spreading woods, flowery braes, hawthorn musical with the thrush, and waters sinuous and clear, had a strong and an abiding influence with his muse. The Banks of the Doon, where it rises among the uplands, may be pastoral, but they can scarcely be called picturesque: but when the stream enters the Land of Burns, the character changes, and hanging woods and spreading holms diversify its course: its waters abate of their turbulence, and move placid and slow, and steal rather than run to meet the ocean.

The poets of Scotland have one and all written of the chief streams of their land with respect and love: this feeling is common to the whole people, and the old Greek who saw gods in his fountains, and heard divine voices in his streams, scarcely expressed his affection more poetically, than the hinds of Annandale continue to do. Ask a man from the banks of the Milk where he dwells, and he will say, "I live i' the water o' Milk." And indeed Scotchmen generally indicate their birth-place by some striking natural object, a river or a hill, rather than by a tower or a town.

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET.

“ But tent me, Davie, ace o’ hearts !
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flattery I detest,)
This life has joys for you and I,
And joys that riches ne’er could buy,
And joys the very best.”

To David Sillar, schoolmaster and poet, Burns addressed two of his best verse epistles. The two bards were comrades and confidants, both in rhyme and love : but how different has been their share of fame ! The Schoolmaster, probably encouraged by the success of the Ploughman, published his Poems in 1789, at Kilmarnock : they are on various subjects, and all alike cold and common-place. One of them is addressed to Burns, of whom he can find nothing better to say than this : —

“ I ne’er was muckle gien to praisin,
Or else ye might be sure o’ fraisin ;
For trouth, I think in solid reason,
Your kintra reed
Plays sweet as Robin Fergusson,
Or his on Tweed.

“ Great numbers on this earthly ba’,
As soon as death gies them a ca’,
Permitted are to slide awa’
And straught forgot.
Forbid that this should ever fa’
To be your lot.”

Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year."

The Second Epistle is in another strain—free, careless and happy, but without the high philosophy of its elder brother: Burns was at that time preparing his poems for the press.

"For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin the words to gar them clink,
Whyles daez't it wi' love, whyles daez't it wi' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons."

When Professor Walker prepared his life of Burns, David Sillar supplied some happy and interesting particulars. The Ploughman Poet, he said, wore a fillemot plaid; had the only tied hair in the parish; was fond of reading while he walked, and fonder still of conversing with the ladies; loved to infuse a certain sarcastic seasoning into his talk with the rougher sex; and it was said by the old man, that he had ay owre much to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles. Sillar was a kind and a good man; lived to an advanced age; became ambitious, "in some bit burgh, to represent a bailie's name," and obtained that distinction in the town of Irvine.

INTERIOR OF THE BIRTH-PLACE OF BURNS.

“The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo’ she, wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof, —
I think we’ll ca’ him Robin.
“He’ll hue misfortunes great an’ sma’,
But ay a heart aboon them a’;
He’ll be a credit till us a, —
We’ll a’ be proud o’ Robin.”

So sang the Bard of Coila, concerning his own birthday; he lived to fulfil so fully the prophecy of his verse, that he is a credit to his country; and all the sons of Scotland rejoice in the Patriot and the Poet. The exterior of the cottage in which he was born, — where his mother, in the words of the old strain, “dreed the birth-time pang,” has been already described. It has now become a place of entertainment for travellers, and offers the allurements of good ale, and anecdotes of Burns. This little hovel has been delineated by the pencil, carved by the chisel, described in prose, and eulogized in rhyme: it has been lectured upon, preached upon, and prayed upon; princes have paused to gaze at it as they passed; poets have mused there, in the hope of catching some yet lingering inspiration; and composers of tours and biographies have wandered about it, to pick up crumbs of intelligence, and lay down the points and bearings of northern genius. Still, for all this, the popular taste is unsatisfied: when all is seen that can be seen, and all described that can be

described, the public fancy has imagined a scene of its own, with too much of poetry and paradise in it for the most romantic of all the real places consecrated by the genius of Burns.

The sunniness, and sweetness, and elegance of the Poet's songs, contrast strangely, sometimes, with the scenes where they are laid, as well as with the now faded and wrinkled dames which they celebrate. Ten thousand times ten thousand travellers might pass the humble shealing nigh the Doon, without suspecting that they trod on classic ground, or inhaled empyrean air. "The whole land of Burns," says a bard, and a high one, "is beautiful; but much of the beauty is the work of the Poet; the daisy was but a weed, and the mouse but worthy of the pettle, till he invested them with moral and sublime attributes. The Banks of Doon, the Braes of Ballochmyle, and the Moors of the Lugar, would receive from us but a glance of hurried pleasure, did we not know that there the muse has left her footsteps, and consecrated all that she touched. Kirk Alloway would be a rude ruin; the cottage where Burns was born, a tinker's hovel; the Doon, a stream of no note; and the Ayr remarkable only for the whetstones, did not a halo, brighter than that of nature, — hung like a light round the brow of some dusky apostle, — steep them in the hues of heaven."

The birth-day of Burns is regularly celebrated, we are told, in his birth-place, by a few of the true spirits of the Doon and the Ayr; but it is not by his native streams alone that rejoicings take place on the twenty-fifth day of January; the Tweed, the Clyde, the Yarrow, and the Nith, have also their festivities; and their example has extended to the Thames, the Tees, the Tyne, the Severn, the Mersey, and the Ouse; the Green Isle too shares with

us in this ; and on the Liffy and the Laggan, the Shannon and the Bann, the name of Scotia's Poet is toasted. It would be unfair to forget that America loves the bard who sang "A man's a man for a' that;" and that India remembers who wrote "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?" On the sea-like rivers of these two great lands, convivial lamps and candles sparkle, and social toasts are given, and Scottish songs sung, on the return of the birth time of Burns ; nay, remote China has been startled with the note of the bag-pipe, and the vociferous strains of Caledonians, on that happy night.

For ourselves, we feel, when the twenty-fifth of January comes its annual round, the joy which lovers of nature feel in the coming of the daisy, and the renewed note of the thrush. We begin, unconsciously, to hum Burns's birth-day song, and our feet move of their own accord, as the sun goes down, towards the well-spread table of a high-souled "Commoner" of the Poet's own beloved "West Country." We regard him with a sort of awe, as he draws forth from its velvet retreat the real marble punch-bowl of the great Robert ; we look on, in "silent expectation," while he fills to the brim with the liquor which the poet loved ; and, putting his own lips reverently to the marble, and handing it round solemnly to his guests, desires them all to drink

"The immortal memory of Robert Burns."

When hands grow unsteady, the relique is returned to its sanctuary, and its place supplied by a splendid chappin stoup of solid silver, emblazoned by the skill of a gifted Caledonian, with scenes from the songs and poems of Burns.

THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

"I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear ;
I hae been merry drinkin' ;
I hae been joyfu' gatherin gear
I hae been happy thinkin
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Though three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a'
Among the Rigs o' Barley."

No old or neglected strain can claim a share in "The Rigs o' Barley" of Burns. It is one of his earliest compositions ; and was, perhaps, a favorite, — for he placed it foremost of the four songs admitted into the edition of his poems printed at Kilmarnock. It was composed, it is believed, in the year 1784, and claims, we are told, its inspiration from the charms of Annie Ronald, a farmer's daughter, who, when she became Mrs. Paterson, of Aikensbrae, and was head of a house, had no wish to hear the song either sung or alluded to. For this we can excuse her. There is sometimes in the songs of Burns, and in this one as much as any, such freedom and warmth, as the heroines, mostly modest and delicate women, might wish abated ; though the freedom was that of innocence, and the warmth that of pure love, still a lady would feel inclined to flutter her fan on reading such audacity, and be inclined to rebuke it. The Poet, in an after song, has alluded to this irreverence of approach, as a critic has called it.

" Her eyes sae bonnie blue betray
 How she repays my passion ;
 But prudence is her o'erword ay,
 She talks of rank and fashion.
 O wha can prudence think upon,
 And sic a lassie by him ?
 O wha can prudence think upon,
 And sae in love as I am ?"

We know not how much the Annie of the year 1784 shared in the sentiments of the matron of Aikenbrae ; but we can see nothing to make the wife or the mother dislike a song which has made her merits imperishable. It is strictly in keeping with the romantic love-trystes, and wooing under the moon, common to the poetic peasantry of Caledonia : their chamber is the fragrant shelter of a wood ; their candles the stars of the sky ; and this confidence in one another's hearts is but rarely abused. It is said that one of Annie's sisters, in allusion to the visits of the Poet, tartly declared, " that she could na see aught about Bob Burns that wad tempt her to sit up wi' him till twal' o'clock at night."

We have said that no old or neglected strain can claim a share in this song : we ought to have remembered that two lines of the chorus, —

" Corn rigs and barley rigs,
 And corn rigs are bonnie," —

are older than the days of Ramsay ; one of the songs of his Gentle Shepherd seems written on an evident acquaintance with these lines at least. The old verses still linger in old men's memories ; they have been pronounced silly ; they are certainly not of a high order, yet they are natural ; and, like most of the lyric strains of the elder days of Scotland, resemble nothing else under the sun.

“ There was a piper had a cow,
But he had nought to gie her;
He took his pipes and played a spring,
And bade his cow consider.
The cow considered very weel,
And gae the piper a penny,
To play the same tune owre again, —
Corn rigs are bonnie !”

“ All the old words,” says Burns, in his Notes to the Museum, “ that ever I could meet with to this air were the following, which seem to have been an old chorus:—

“ O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonnie;
Where’er you meet a bonnie lass,
Preen up her cockernony.”

Choruses, by adhering to the tunes, have been preserved, frequently, when the songs, of which they formed a part, have been lost; from a due consideration of these airs and fragments, we may safely conclude that Scotland of old had many songs, relating to trades, pursuits, and professions, which belonged, like the flags, and cups, and pictures, and Bibles, to bodies corporate. Some of these songs were in honor, others in scorn; the bard of the masons scorned the shoemakers; the poet of the shoemakers despised the tailors; while the husbandman had a strain, in which he asserted the dignity of the ploughshare over all callings.

ELLISLAND.

“ Adown winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers as they spring ;
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to sing.”

ELLISLAND stands on the southern side of the river Nith, some seven miles up the stream from Dumfries, and crowns a precipitous scaur, or bank, below which lie the rich holms of Dalswinton, Carnsalloch, and Portrack. The situation is beautiful. The farm, as a good judge observed to Burns, seemed chosen more for its fine prospects than its rich pastures : it is part holm, and part croft. The road from Glasgow to Dumfries passes it on the south ; the Nith bounds it on the north ; eastward the tower and lands of the Isle skirt it ; while on the west it unites with the woods of Friar's Carse. Burns, in the spring of the year 1788, took a three nineteen years' lease of Ellisland, from Miller of Dalswinton, on terms prescribed by his own friends, and planned the present dwelling-house, barn, byre, and cattle sheds ; and while the masons and joiners were busy, he was busy also, for he saw every stone as it was laid, and every bit of timber squared, and loved to afford his help when strength was needed. While these humble structures were erecting, the Poet's wife was residing in Ayrshire, but he sheltered himself in the old farm-house of Ellisland, to which a wigwam is a palace ; and there, on wet days, which are frequent in the moist north, amid smoke and soot-drops, he strove to amuse

himself with speculating on the future profits of his grounds, or visiting the Riddels, the Millers, the Coplands, and Maxwells of the vale ; and in amending or composing songs for the Musical Museum of Johnson.

The farm-house of Ellisland was reckoned no humble one in the year of grace 1788 ; and when the walls were plastered, its floors of hewn stone and deal laid, and its slate roof on, frugal people began to talk of the Poet's extravagance, and bode no good to his speculations. When spring came, he might be seen holding his own plough for an hour, or with a sheet across his shoulder, realizing the image of thrift, in one of his earliest songs,

“ With joy the tentie seedsman stalks ;”

but his chief pleasure was to wander on the banks of the Nith, composing his mind, for the Nithsdale Muse, who seemed for a time less willing to be his inspirer than was his own Coila, on the Doon and the Ayr. In the walk up the stream, rough as it was with hazel and briar, he loved to indulge, when the river, swollen with upland rains, after chafing against the free-stone rock on one side, and a bordering of oak and ash on the other, freed itself at the Fleucher-ford, and came Ellisland-ward, foaming from bank to brae, and reddening its current with the loamy clay, washed from the scaur on which the Poet stood. This was a scene he confessed that he loved to contemplate ; but the walk most productive of poetry was the one which conducted him from his house down the river-side, — a beautiful path, covered with wild clover and gowans, in the season, and which gradually descends from the upper ground occupied by the house, till it approaches so close to the river, that one may dip his foot in it as he saunters along.

It was in this favorite walk that Burns composed the Wounded Hare, the Elegy on Captain Henderson, the song called To Mary in Heaven, and, last and best, his Tam o' Shanter. While composing the ode to his Mary, he was under the influence of more than the ordinary passion bestowed by the Muse : it was the anniversary of her death ; he became, as the evening advanced, thoughtful and restless ; he tried to read, to converse, and to meditate,—all was in vain ; he at length rose, and, though the night was cold, walked to the river-side. He stopped long : Mrs. Burns grew uneasy ; and, though reluctant at all times to intrude on his studies, she ventured to follow him ; he was not in his favorite walk by the Nith, nor yet by the wood-side : at length she found him in the stack-yard, stretched on a heap of straw, gazing upwards at a star, and repeating aloud the first line of his celebrated song. For some time she refrained from speaking ; at last he saw her, and was prevailed upon to arise, and go with her to the house, where he continued to muse till he finished his affecting ode. In the following exquisite verse, he seems to have had the banks of the Nith at Ellisland, as much as those of the Ayr at Coilsfield on his fancy :—

“ Ayr gurgling kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening, green ;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twined amorous round the raptured scene.
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.”

While composing Tam o' Shanter, his ecstasy, though of a more joyous kind, was sufficiently serious : he walked hurriedly to and fro by the river-brink ; he lengthened

his steps as he became more and more possessed ; he recited his poem aloud, as it arose rapidly on his fancy, and the tears were running down his cheeks in the rapture of composition. Such was the account of Mrs. Burns, who witnessed it. Ellisland is now the property of Joseph Taylor, Esq.

A FAMILY IN HEAVEN.

“ When soon or late they reach that coast
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,—
A family in heaven !”

THE subject present to the mind of Burns, in this brief but beautiful poem, has frequently inspired others — artists as well as poets. Blake, in one of his remarkable illustrations to Blair's Grave, — a noble and very original poem, — delineates a family group, removed from the domestic hearth to the threshold of paradise, and exhibits them brightened with a halo, half of earth and half of heaven. Other painters have ventured to embody similar scenes. The paintings of the great masters of Italy abound with corresponding creations ; for in no other land has poetry poured forth more of her spirit on canvass, or kindled her lights half so divinely in the cause of religion. The splendid churches of that fine country are filled with these magnificent works ; good men and pious women are raised from this gross earth, and throned on clouds, or seated among the angels ; and children, — for of such is the kingdom of Christ, — wander, clothed with the sun, with seraphs and souls of the just made perfect. The mind and the imagination of the pious spectator felt the influence of those magnificent pictures, and the great painters of Rome shared in the fame and in the wealth of the church.

Into the simple, plain, unpretending Kirk of Scotland, art of no kind has been permitted to enter ; the inspiration of Scripture, and the eloquence of the preacher, are entrusted with the task of exalting the minds of the congregation into true fervor and devotion ; neither the refinements of taste, nor the grossness of the senses, are appealed to ; it is a matter of faith and understanding, rather than of the eye. The New Testament nowhere insists on the personal loveliness of the Virgin, or on the Apollo-like beauty of our Saviour ; and hence the Presbyterian form of worship has, on account of its perfect simplicity, been accused of looking bald and bare — uninviting and uninspiring.

The family, whose meekness, modesty, and domestic enjoyments inspired the poem of Burns, was that of Dr. Lawrie, minister of the parish of Loudon. It is entitled, “Lying at a reverend friend’s house, one night, the author left the following verses in the room where he slept.” Lawrie was a generous man, and a good scholar ; he loved to see the Poet at his manse, and relished both his verse and his conversation. “The first time,” says Gilbert Burns, “that Robert heard the spinnet played, was at the house of Dr. Lawrie, then minister of Loudon, now in Glasgow, having given up the parish in favor of his son. Dr. Lawrie had several daughters : one of them played ; the father and the mother led down the dance ; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the Poet, and the other guests, mixed in it. It was a delightful family scene for Robert, then lately introduced to the world : his mind was roused to a poetic enthusiasm, and the stanzas were left in the room where he slept.”

This happened, it would seem, soon after the publica-

tion of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems, and when some "ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at his heels." The great merit of the volume, and the elegant praise of the verses which he composed on the family, induced Dr. Lawrie to speak of Burns and his merits to the blind bard, Blacklock, whose high commendations induced the Poet to stop his chest, then on the way to Greenock, turn his face from the West Indies to "Edina, Scotia's darling seat," and resolve that his farewell, beginning thus—

"The gloomy night is gathering fast,"

should not be the last strain poured from his harp in the land of Caledonia. The world is sometimes disinclined to sanction the commendations of the tasteful and critical; but the event justified Blacklock's counsel, and the Poet's resolution. Burns was a child of impulse, — the impulse this time was right; the voice that called was one from heaven. "Many instances," says Blacklock to Lawrie, "I have seen of nature's force or beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages, but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humor in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, or too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It were much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, should immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertions of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been pub-

lished in my memory." The poem in which Burns records the worth of the house of Lawrie, is in the form of a prayer : each verse contains a fine picture of the pious sire, the tender mother, the dutiful son, and the beauteous daughters, and closes with raising them from earth, and placing them " A Family in Heaven."

GLOBE CLOSE, DUMFRIES,

(THE HOWFF OF BURNS.)

“Yestreen I had a pint o’ wine,
A place where body saw na ;
Yestreen lay on this breast of mine
The gowden locks of Anna.”

THE Tabard Inn, where Chaucer caroused with the Canterbury pilgrims ; the Boar’s Head, where some of the heroes of Shakspeare, in new satin, discussed old sack ; the Mermaid Tavern, made famous by the learning and wit of Ben Jonson ; Wills’s, which Dryden frequented, and where Pope, when a boy, went to look at him ; Button’s, made eminent by the socialities of the classic Addison ; and Ambrose’s, distinguished in our day by the poetic sallies of the chief wits of the North ; are all places rendered immortal by the Muse ; nor can we say less of Poosy Nansie’s, Auld Nanse Tinnock’s, and The Howff, endeared to all lovers of sociality and song by the genius of Burns. Places which in themselves would pass unheeded, and which have no pretence to beauty, or claims on the picturesque, become both, the moment they are allied to an imperishable name ; all the places we have mentioned are without any interest, save what association bestows. The Tabard Inn is very old, and not very neat ; but the name Chaucer hangs its walls with tapestry. The Howff is in a dark street ; its walls are dusky, and its ceilings low ; but the voice of the Poet calls down light from above upon it : and all who love

his memory pass with reverence its sanded threshold, rest themselves in the little parlor, where he indulged in his humors, and call for a glass of that pure liquor which its inspired occupant relished.

The Globe Tavern is situated in the Globe Close, nearly opposite the George Inn, and a little below the King's Arms, in the high, or principal street of Dumfries. It was once a place of note, and regarded as the second-best tavern in the town, and was occupied by the young and beautiful Countess of Airlie, when, in 1745, Dumfries fell into the hands of the Highland chiefs. Nor is it without a legend of those times. A certain squire of the north of England, of the ancient name of Vane, who held rank in the rebel host, saw that the adventure was sure to end tragically, and became desirous to escape. This was, however, no safe experiment; he communicated his wishes to the landlord of The Howff, who, at great personal jeopardy, concealed him, till the pipes of the clans summoned the army to depart, and then helped him to a disguise, in which he made his escape into England, and finally to France, where, it is said, he afterwards found one of the sons of his benefactor in prison, and released, and clothed, and sent him back wealthy to Dumfries. The more serious portion of the people of the town persist in calling this tavern The Globe; but all who have a liking to the memory or the poetry of Burns, call it "The Howff," in imitation of the bard of Coila. "This," he says, in a letter to Thomson, "will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern, here; which, for these many years, has been my Howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze."

In The Howff, the liquor was abundant and good, and

the attendant maidens of the hostess handsome and biddable ; there Burns was in the practice of taking strangers, who desired an evening hour of his company ; there he often sat with two or three social companions, talking of the miseries of dependence ; there he loved to give “an hour’s discharge to care,” over a pint of wine, and talk to Anna of the gowden locks, who was related to the mistress of the house. It was there, too, that he recited his election lampoons to Professor Walker ; and as the noise and fun grew fast and furious, seemed reluctant to leave the empty bowl ; and it was there, too, that he indulged, one frosty night, in prolonged socialities ; and, falling asleep on his way home, increased that “slow consuming illness,” which carried him to an untimely grave. The Howff still bears evidence of the presence of Burns. “I visited it,” says an admirer of the poet, “in the summer of 1834, and found it a decent inn, with fair accommodation, good liquor, and good one-horse chaises. The favorite corner where the Poet loved to sit, was pointed out ; and I was directed to the windows, on which many diamond pencils had tried to imitate the bold, manly hand of the bard. Some of these scribblings were lines from his songs, and some of them were the names of dames whom his too complaisant Muse had honored. Though I saw nothing which I could receive as the offspring of his own hand, the place is well worth a visit ; the lane, or close, as it is called, is picturesque though narrow ; the windows are all, I think, on one side ; and the light, which even on a sunny day they admit to the rooms, is dim and insufficient. But when lighted up on a market-night, The Howff is in its glory ; its rooms are crowded with lads and lasses, jocund and joyous—with grave matrons and douce men,

taking a farewell glass ;— with dealers in cattle, traders in corn, travelling merchants, all drinking, all talking, and, generally, all contented ; while among the whole, the bustling hostess and her active maidens are busy distributing liquor, and receiving cash. Such was The Howff when I saw it.”

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT.

“ What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin-gray, and a' that ;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine, —
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that ;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.”

THIS manly song was written in the Poet's little homely house, in Mill-hole-brae, now Burns Street, Dumfries, and communicated to George Thomson, in the following words, in January, 1795:—"A great critic, Aikin, on Song, says that wine and love are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and, consequently, is no song ; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, inverted into rhyme." Thomson seems to have received this noble lyric very coldly ; but those acquainted with the feverish state of the public pulse in the year Ninety-five, will not be surprised even had he treated it ungraciously ; in those days Europe was up in arms, —

“ Cannons were roaring, and bullets were flying ;”

and France was putting forth, in favor of liberty, those terrible energies which nearly made her mistress of the world. Our rulers saw revolution in all the movements of the people ; and heard sedition and treason in every public murmur : the actions of Burns were watched, and

all his words weighed, and his "Man's a man for a' that," was sung as secretly as was "You're welcome, Charlie Stuart," in the days of the Jacobite rebellions.

A strain of this character seems to have been present to the mind of Burns from the time he read Pope's line, claiming an honest man as the noblest work of God; and composed his affecting poem, "Man was made to mourn." It is a popular exposition of sentiments he had long entertained; and though called into life by the fierce voice of the times, not a sentiment is uttered which is not natural to the heart of genius. Yet let no one imagine that he desired to cure the disorders which "Ribbons, stars, and a' that," had wrought in the land, by calling in the republican sword of France; he longed for liberty; he wished to see talent enjoying the honors which hereditary dulness had usurped; but he felt this ought to be accomplished by native hands, or not accomplished at all. He has in another song clothed this sentiment in words which can never be forgotten:—

"O let us not, like snarling curs,
In wrangling be divided;
Till slap come in an unco loon,
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrongs be righted."

Having freed Burns from a charge, not seldom made, of desiring the help of foreigners to bring about more equal legislation, we may quote, without fear, some of the sharp stanzas of the stinging strain, "A man's a man for a' that." In the first verse he vindicates poverty from the scorn of wealth.

"Is there, for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head, an' a' that;
 The coward-slave, we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that;
 The rank is but the guinea-stamp —
 The man's the gowd for a' that."

Had the poet lived in these latter days, he would likely have accepted the help of the new coinage to heighten his satire, and written —

"The rank is but the *sovereign* stamp."

Having disposed of the merely wealthy — of men who, like striped pumpkins, grew and swelled up on the great midden-stead of scheming and calculation, and sprinkled a little of the nitric acid of his muse on ribbons and stars, he approaches the throne, and that with no ceremonious bows.

"A king can make a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities, and a' that,
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
 Are higher ranks than a' that."

He concludes by expressing his belief that the day is at hand, when men of all lands will be brothers, and sense and worth hold universal dominion: a sentiment as likely to come to pass as that of the Spencean reformist, who says he desires no more than that all men shall be honest, and all women virtuous.

WALLACE TOWER, AYR.

“The dreary dungeon clock had numbered two,
And Wallace Tower had sworn the fact was true.”

WERE William Wallace and Robert Burns to return to earth and visit Ayr, a town which they loved, the hero would not know the tower in which he was imprisoned, nor the poet the structure of which he sang. The villanous clutch of restoration, as Fuseli said of retouched pictures, has been laid upon it, and instead of the square and solid tower of the days of John Baliol, we have a stately, recessed, and pinnacled substitute, rising high in the air, and emblazoned in the mixed manner of the middle ages. The new tower is indeed far more handsome to look upon than the old ; but modern splendor is sometimes ill exchanged for even mouldering and tottering things ; we have got a structure which must depend upon its own merits ; the historic and poetic halo which enabled us to see Wallace, and Bruce, and Burns, and rendered the rough, rude, coarse features of the old peel interesting, is gone now and for ever. Their memory, indeed, like an ill-laid ghost, continues to haunt the spot and this must supply the place of reality — the spell of the unimaginative : the bell to which the Poet alludes, is all that is old in the edifice.

“Wallace Tower stands,” says an authority, the beauty of whose account lies in the measurements, “within a hundred yards of the river Ayr to the west, on the left

side of the street that leads winding from the Cross of Ayr, and which terminates in two roads, the one to Cumnock, and the other to the old bridge over the Doon to Carrick. This tower, according to tradition, derives its name from William Wallace, commonly called Sir William Wallace, who is celebrated in the history of Scotland, and of whom Thomson justly says,

‘Great patriot hero, ill-requited chief.’”

Burns loved to walk and muse in places consecrated by the footsteps of Wallace : while he walked the streets of Ayr, he imagined that he trod the pavement where, in the dawn of youth, the hero slew the Buckler-Player : he traced, in imagination, the site of the celebrated Barns, where, stern in retributive justice, Wallace destroyed the inhuman murderers of his kindred and friends ; and he loved to wander on Sundays in Leglen wood, and visit Cartland Craigs, where Wallace often sought refuge from the southron : these, he regarded as sacred places ; but the poet might have remembered, that with Wallace Tower one of the most moving incidents in the hero's life is associated. When very young, Wallace was on a visit to Ayr : an English garrison occupied the castle, and, commanded by Lord Percy, controlled the land at will : he beheld this with no kindly feeling, and slew the military purveyor, who was acting the oppressor in a matter of marketing ; the soldiers flew to arms, and though he killed several, they bore him down with spears, thrust him into the tower, afterwards known by his name, and sentenced him to be starved to death. When that cruel doom was to all appearance fulfilled—for he was kept without food or drink till nature gave way—he was cast forth for dead, and the English gathered about the body, and said, “ So this is the Wallace, who is to rescue Scotland thrice ! ”

But God, to whom he prayed in his sad extremity, had not forsaken him : his nurse begged leave to bury his body, and, on taking him home, discovered signs of life.

“ His heart was wight, and flichtered to and fro.”

She placed him in a warm bed, fed him with milk from the warm breast of her daughter, and in a day or two he revived. At this time, Thomas the Rhymer visited Ayr, and an English priest taunted him with false prophecy. “ This Wallace of yours,” said he, “ who was to do such glorious actions on English crests, is dead and gone—I saw his body cast out to the dogs.” “ Am I dead ?” inquired the Prophet ; “ I tell thee, priest, ere Wallace dies, he will send many thousands of thy tyrannic countrymen to a bloody grave !” This boast, it is like, caused the hero to set off before he was quite recovered, to Richardtown, the residence of his cousin, Adam Wallace. This was at night : he was met by the captain of Langcastle, with two of his men. “ Scot, thou art a spy,” said the southron : and attempted to seize him. Wallace replied meekly, “ I am ill, for God’s love let me alone ;” but as he spoke, he snatched out a rusty sword from his cloak, and struck his adversary with an energy which imprisonment seems not to have impaired ; for he cleft his neck bone in two ; by a couple of similar blows bestowed on the captain’s followers, he obtained horses, arms, and money, and escaped with joy to his relations.

The town of Ayr is prosperous and elegant. The visitors of the Land of Burns—they are from all countries—are said to leave it with the eulogium of the Poet on their lips :

“ Auld Ayr, which ne’er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonnie lasses.”

SCOTS, WHA HAE WI' WALLACE BLED.

“ Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led ;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie.”

THIS martial ode was conceived and composed, according to the relation of Syme, in the midst of a storm, on the wilds of Kenmore, in Galloway. Syme was the companion of the Poet, at the time of which he speaks ; but his statement is at variance with the direct assertion of Burns himself, who says, that it was composed in an *evening walk*, on the banks of the Nith, when warmed into a pitch of enthusiasm about liberty and independence. The storm at Kenmore was in the July of 1793 ; the yesternight's evening walk to which the Poet alludes was in the September of the same year.

The air to which this song was written, is “ Hey, tuttie taitie.”—“ I am delighted,” the Poet writes, “ with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air ‘ Hey, tuttie taitie,’ may rank among this number ; but well I know that with Fraser's hautboy it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn.” The tradition had much to do in giving force to the manly address to his men, which the Poet put into the mouth of

Bruce, on the glorious struggle for freedom on that memorable day.

In August, 1787, Burns paid a visit to the famous field of Bannockburn, and in his loose memoranda recorded the feelings which the place awakened. "Came on to Bannockburn. Shown the old house, where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of Bannockburn: the hole in the stone where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself, that I see my gallant heroic countrymen coming o'er the hill, and down upon the plunderers of their country, and the murderers of their fathers: noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsty foe! I see them meet in gloriously-triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic leader, and rescued liberty and independence." "This morning," he writes to his friend Muir, from Stirling, 26 August, 1787,—"I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn." An ode such as this was to be expected from the enthusiasm which the place gave rise to, and the feeling which the air awakened, when played on Fraser's hautboy—Burns seldom wrote but when roused by extraordinary emotions.

The last stanza of the song is perhaps the most popular:—

"Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow! —
Let us do or die!"

but the sentiment is borrowed, as the Poet indeed admits, from the common stall edition of the Minstrel's Wallace.

“ A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow : ”

a couplet, he adds, worthy of Homer.

What Burns thought of the address himself, is yet to be told — “ I mentioned to you a Scots ode or song I had lately composed,” he writes to an anonymous correspondent, “ and which I think has some merit. Allow me to enclose it.” To Captain Miller he says, — “ I really think the piece is in my best manner ; ” but to Lord Buchan he offers no opinion : “ Will your lordship,” he writes, “ allow me to present you with the enclosed little composition of mine, as a small tribute of gratitude for the acquaintance with which you have pleased to honor me ? Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with anything in history, which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe, to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly daring and greatly injured people ; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.” Bruce and his men have lately found another Scottish minstrel, equal to the task of singing their deeds on the field of Bannockburn.

THE TWEED: COLDSTREAM BRIDGE.

“Yarrow and Tweed to mony a tune
Owre Scotland rings.”

WHEN Burns, in May, 1787, visited the chief scenes on the Scottish Border, on reaching Coldstream he wrote in his memorandum book, “Coldstream—went over to England—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic.” To those words, few but beautiful, a deeper and more pointed meaning was given by Robert Ainslie, of Berrywell, the companion of his tour. “As soon,” said he, “as the Poet reached the English side of the stream, he knelt down, and with extreme emotion, and a countenance rapt and inspired, prayed for Scotland, repeating aloud these lines of his *Cotter’s Saturday Night* :

“O Scotia! my dear, my native soil,
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent;
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content:
And oh may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury’s contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe’er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.”

Coldstream is a thriving and beautiful little town, and the parish in which it stands is cultivated like a garden: the Tweed, clear, deep, and broad, flows close to the place, commencing four miles higher, at Carham, its separation of England from Scotland, and presenting on both sides romantic and shady walks for those who love to

meditate and muse. The town is undefiled by manufactures : here are old ruins, warlike and devotional, to exercise the conjectures of the antiquary : here the historian may contemplate the ford in the river, through which, in other days, the English made their military inroads, and were driven

“ Travel-soiled and weather-beaten back ; —”

and by which the Scots often penetrated, spear in hand, to the gates of Durham and York : nor is it unimportant to say, that he may do all this, and stand on the handsome bridge which, like the union of which it is a type, joins in peace and love the once hostile nations. Here too General Monk raised that celebrated regiment, the Coldstream guards, and watched the doings of Parliament, as well as the movements of his rival, General Lambert ; and more than all, here stands the private temple, and here dwells the priest, to whom all impetuous lovers hasten from the cruelty of parents, or the reluctant delay of a scrupulous church, and are satisfactorily united in what ancients and moderns call “ the bonds of Hymen.”

All around, but more particularly on the Scottish side of the Bridge, are places well known in tale and history. Where Swinton House now stands, there was once a castle of great antiquity, the stronghold of the gallant family of Swinton, one of whose chiefs slew, in the battle-front, the Duke of Clarence, brother to Henry the Fifth ; and from one of whose daughters, the illustrious Sir Walter Scott, of Abbotsford, claimed descent. Here is shown the field of Hollywell Haugh, where Edward the First met the nobility of Scotland, on the death of the Fair Maiden of Norway, and as insolently as unjustly claimed the right of lord paramount over a free nation.

Literature too has its claims : less than a mile from Coldstream stands Lennel-House, lately the residence of Patrick Brydone, author of the *Travels in Sicily and Malta* ; and the district gave birth to Alexander Hume, a poet of high powers, who sings very sweetly as well as truly of his parent stream.

“How many happy hearts ye make, how many mou’s ye feed,
The very weanies, lispig, pray for blessings on ye, Tweed.”

It is, in truth, Poetry which sheds enduring glory on a land. But for the bards of Greece, her memory would have only been a name and a few broken stones ; but for the authors of Rome, what should we have known of the proud flight of her eagles. Virgil’s verse, and Homer’s song, have long outlived their native empires. What those mighty poets did for their countries of old, Burns and Scott have done of late for Scotland : the whole kingdom, highland and lowland, is brightened with romance and vocal with song : the genius of Scott has driven a railroad through the *terra incognita* of the North, and shown, instead of a wild race dwelling among rocks and heather, and hostile to all who had not the taste to wear tartan, a highly chivalrous people, and a highly romantic land. Before Burns arose in the West, we only knew that Coila was a clever dairy-maid, who excelled in butter and cheese ; we knew not, till he proved it, that her vales were lovely, and her maidens beautiful.

“Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measured stile ;
She lay like some unkennd-of isle
Beside New Holland.”

The breath of the Muse removed the cloud, as the sun dispels the mist ; and Ayrshire in all its beauty was made known to the rest of the world.

THE LASS OF BALLOCHMYLE.

“ With careless step I onward strayed,
My heart rejoiced in nature’s joy ;
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanced to spy.”

ALONG the right or north bank of the Ayr, near the small village of Catrine, and about two miles from the residence of Burns at Mossgiel, lie the beautiful Braes of Ballochmyle. “ The whole course of the Ayr,” says Currie, “ is fine ; but the banks of that river, as it bends to the eastward above Mauchline, are singularly beautiful.” When the Poet was a boy, the house and estate of Ballochmyle were the property of Sir John Whitefoord, the nephew of Oliver Goldsmith’s Caleb Whitefoord,

“ That compound of oddity, frolic, and fun,”

and the Papirius Cursor of many a curious newspaper column. The Whitefoords were of old standing in Ayrshire, and generally respected ; but on the decline of their fortunes, their fine property passed from their hands into those of Claud Alexander, Esq. a gentleman who had returned to his native country, from a long and prosperous residence in India. The farewell of the Whitefoords to the home of their ancestors was commemorated by Burns in a song, not one of the happiest of his effusions.

“ Farewell the bonny banks of Ayr,
Farewell the braes of Ballochmyle.”

The Whitefoords were the friends of the Bard : with the Alexanders he had yet to get acquainted ; and this he seems to have sought in a poetic way.

The Braes of Ballochmyle was one of Burns's favorite haunts ; it was literally his musing ground : happening to meet, one fine evening of July, with Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, the sister of the new proprietor, then very young, and, it is said, very beautiful, he was so much struck with her charms, that he recorded them in the song of the Lass of Ballochmyle, a production elegant, and sweet, and impassioned. He had recently published the Kilmarnock edition of his Poems, and his name was so well known in the district by the month of November, that he thought he might inform the lady of the strain she had inspired. He accordingly wrote it out in a fair hand, and enclosing it in a rather elaborate letter, sent it to Miss Alexander. He was on the wing for Jamaica—for, he says, "some ill-advised person had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels." This was his expiring effort to obtain the notice of the rich of his native land.

The letter contains much of the man, and relates the circumstances under which the song was composed. "Poets," he says, "are such *outré* beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the laws of propriety than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for all the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you, in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present you with. The scenery was nearly taken from real life : though I dare say, madam, you do not recollect, as I believe you scarcely noticed, the poetic *rêveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out, as chance directed, in

the favorite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gayety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills : not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, nor the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. Such was the scene, and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye. Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at a moment sworn eternal peace with such an object." The song is conceived in a free style, and in a strain of luxurious, some have added, presumptuous, fervor.

The bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle, however, noticed neither song nor letter ; and Burns resented her silence, it is said, with some bitterness : indeed in the book into which he copied both, he complains that they were unhonored with any notice. Currie and Lockhart have defended the propriety of the lady's conduct, as chivalrous gentlemen should ; but they lay too much stress on the little that was known of Burns—and that little, evil—when he wrote his letter : surely they must have forgot that the Poet was then no unknown person, for his poems were before the world, and he was the correspondent of Mrs. Stewart of Stair, and others of equal name. The impression which Miss Alexander's neglect made on the mind of Burns was long uneffaced : when his friend Mrs. Dunlop, to whom he complained, excused the conduct of the Lass of Ballochmyle, he bitterly answered, " Had a half-witling Lord written the poem, Madam, would she have left it unanswered ?" But Miss Alexander has lived to make some reparation ; she has treasured up the letter, and its precious enclosure, and entrusts them in no hands

save her own : she points out to the admirers of Burns the spot among the Braes where the Poet met her, and shows them a little rustic temple or grotto, commemorative of the subject, the song, and the Author.

ORIGINAL LETTERS.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY.

I.
TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY,
DUMFRIES HOUSE.

[Who the John Kennedy' was to whom Burns addressed this note enclosing "The Cotter's Saturday Night," it is now, perhaps, vain to inquire: the Kennedy to whom Mr. Cobbett introduces us was a Thomas — perhaps a relation.]

Mossgiel, 3rd March, 1786.

SIR,

I HAVE done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my Cottager.—If you have a leisure minute, I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it.

"Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse," *

ROBT. BURNES.

* Poem LXXV.

II.

TO MR. AIKEN.

[Robert Aiken, the gentleman to whom the "Cotter's Saturday Night" is inscribed, is also introduced in the "Brigs of Ayr." This is the last letter to which Burns seems to have subscribed his name in the spelling of his ancestors.]

Mossgiel, 3rd April, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your kind letter with double pleasure, on account of the second flattering instance of Mrs. C.'s notice and approbation, I assure you I

" 'Turn out the burnt side o' my shin,"

as the famous Ramsay, of jingling memory, says, at such a patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgment in your very best manner of telling truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank leaf of Miss More's Work: — *

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to press. I expect to hear from you the first opportunity.

I am ever, dear sir,

Yours,

ROBT. BURNES.

* See Poem LXXVIII.

III.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

["The small piece," the very last of his productions, which the poet enclosed in this letter, was "The Mountain Daisy," called in the manuscript more properly "The Gowan."]

Mossgiel, 20th April, 1786.

SIR,

By some neglect in Mr. Hamilton, I did not hear of your kind request for a subscription paper 'till this day. I will not attempt any acknowledgment for this, nor the manner in which I see your name in Mr. Hamilton's subscription list. Allow me only to say, Sir, I feel the weight of the debt.

I have here likewise inclosed a small piece, the very latest of my productions. I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart, which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, "melancholy has marked for her own."

Our race comes on a-pace ; that much-expected scene of revelry and mirth ; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with which your last flattered the expectation of.

Sir,

Your indebted humble servant,

R. B.

IV.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

[Burns was busy in a two-fold sense at present ; he was seeking patrons in every quarter for his contemplated volume, and he was composing for it some of his most exquisite poetry.]

Mossiel, 16th May, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you the above hasty copy as I promised. In about three or four weeks I shall probably set the press a-going. I am much hurried at present, otherwise your diligence, so very friendly in my subscription, should have a more lengthened acknowledgment from,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged Servant,

R. B.

V.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

[It is a curious chapter in the life of Burns to count the number of letters which he wrote, the number of fine poems he composed, and the number of places which he visited in the unhappy summer and autumn of 1786.]

Kilmarnock, August, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR truly facetious epistle of the 3rd inst. gave me much entertainment. I was sorry I had not the pleasure

of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our lee way on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day.—I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class.—Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my authorship; but now you have them, let them speak for themselves.—

Farewell, my dear friend! may guid luck hit you,
 And 'mang her favorites admit you!
 If e'er Detraction shore to smit you,
May nane believe him!
 And ony de'il that thinks to get you,
Good Lord deceive him.

R. E.

VI.

TO MR. JAMES BURNES,
 MONTROSE.

[The good and generous James Burness, of Montrose, was ever ready to rejoice with his cousin's success or sympathize with his sorrows, but he did not like the change which came over the old northern surname of Burness, when the bard modified it into Burns: the name, now a rising one in India, is spelt Burnes.]

Mossiel, Tuesday noon, Sept. 26, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I THIS moment receive yours—receive it with the

honest hospitable warmth of a friend's welcome. Whatever comes from you wakens always up the better blood about my heart, which your kind little recollections of my parental friends carries as far as it will go. 'Tis there that man is blest. 'Tis there, my friend, man feels a consciousness of something within him above the trodden clod! The grateful reverence to the hoary (earthly) author of his being—the burning glow when he clasps the woman of his soul to his bosom—the tender yearnings of heart for the little angels to whom he has given existence—these nature has poured in milky streams about the human heart; and the man who never rouses them to action, by the inspiring influences of their proper objects, loses by far the most pleasurable part of his existence.

My departure is uncertain, but I do not think it will be till after harvest. I will be on very short allowance of time indeed, if I do not comply with your friendly invitation. When it will be I don't know, but if I can make my wish good, I will endeavor to drop you a line some time before. My best compliments to Mrs. —; I should [be] equally mortified should I drop in when she is abroad, but of that I suppose there is little chance.

What I have wrote heaven knows; I have not time to review it; so accept of it in the beaten way of friendship. With the ordinary phrase—perhaps rather more than the ordinary sincerity,

I am, dear Sir,

Ever yours,

R. B.

VII.

TO DR. ARCHIBALD LAURIE.

Mossiel, 13th Nov. 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE along with this sent the two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the Songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the songs with the volume of the Scotch Poets returned as soon as they can conveniently be despatched. If they are left at Mr. Wilson, the bookseller's shop, Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Laurie; and a Poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies; particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of a Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St. Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion.

I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

ROBERT BURNS.

VIII.

TO MR. GAVIN HAMILTON.

[This letter was first published by Robert Chambers, who considered it as closing the inquiry, "was Burns a married man?" No

doubt Burns thought himself unmarried, and the Rev. Mr. Auld was of the same opinion, since he offered him a certificate that he was single : but no opinion of either priest or lawyer, including the disclamation of Jean Armour, and the belief of Burns, could have, in my opinion, barred the claim of the children to full legitimacy, according to the law of Scotland.]

Edinburgh, Jan. 7, 1787.

To tell the truth among friends, I feel a miserable blank in my heart, with the want of her, and I don't think I shall ever meet with so delicious an armful again. She has her faults ; and so have you and I ; and so has every body ;

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft ;
 They've ta'en me in and a' that ;
 But clear your decks, and here's the sex,
 I like the jads for a' that.
 For a' that and a' that,
 And twice as muckle's a' that.

.

I have met with a very pretty girl, a Lothian farmer's daughter, whom I have almost persuaded to accompany me to the west country, should I ever return to settle there. By the bye, a Lothian farmer is about an Ayrshire squire of the lower kind ; and I had a most delicious ride from Leith to her house yesternight, in a hackney-coach, with her brother and two sisters, and brother's wife. We had dined all together at a common friend's house in Leith, and danced, drank, and sang till late enough. The night was dark, the claret had been good, and I thirsty. * * *

R. B.

IX.

TO MR. SIBBALD,

BOOKSELLER IN EDINBURGH.

[This letter first appeared in that very valuable work, Nicholl's Illustrations of Literature.]

SIR,

Lawn Market.

So little am I acquainted with the words and manners of the more public and polished walks of life, that I often feel myself much embarrassed how to express the feelings of my heart, particularly gratitude:—

“ Rude am I in my speech,
And little therefore shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself—”

The warmth with which you have befriended an obscure man and a young author in the last three magazines—I can only say, Sir, I feel the weight of the obligation; I wish I could express my sense of it. In the meantime accept of the conscious acknowledgment from,

Sir,

Your obliged servant,

R. B.

X.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

[The poet addressed the following letter to the Earl of Glencairn when he commenced his journey to the Border. It was first printed

in the third edition of Lockhart's Life of Burns; an eloquent and manly work.]

MY LORD,

I go away to-morrow morning early, and allow me to vent the fulness of my heart, in thanking your lordship for all that patronage, that benevolence and that friendship, with which you have honored me. With brimful eyes, I pray that you may find in that great Being, whose image you so nobly bear, that friend which I have found in you. My gratitude is not selfish design—that I disdain—it is not dodging after the heels of greatness—that is an offering you disdain. It is a feeling of the same kind with my devotion.

R. B.

XI.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR.

[William Dunbar, Colonel of the Crochallan Fencibles. The name has a martial sound, but the corps which he commanded was a club of wits, whose courage was exercised on "paitricks, teals, moor-powts, and plovers."]

Lawn-market, Monday morning.

DEAR SIR,

In justice to Spenser, I must acknowledge that there is scarcely a poet in the language could have been a more agreeable present to me; and in justice to you, allow me to say, Sir, that I have not met with a man in Edinburgh to whom I would so willingly have been indebted for the gift. The tattered rhymes I herewith present you, and the handsome volumes of Spenser for which I am so much indebted to your goodness, may perhaps be

not in proportion to one another ; but be that as it may, my gift, though far less valuable, is as sincere a mark of esteem as yours.

The time is approaching when I shall return to my shades ; and I am afraid my numerous Edinburgh friendships are of so tender a construction, that they will not bear carriage with me. Yours is one of the few that I could wish of a more robust constitution. It is indeed very probable that when I leave this city, we part never more to meet in this sublunary sphere ; but I have a strong fancy that in some future eccentric planet, the comet of happier systems than any with which astronomy is yet acquainted, you and I, among the harum scarum sons of imagination and whim, with a hearty shake of a hand, a metaphor and a laugh, shall recognise old acquaintance :

“ Where wit may sparkle all its rays,
 Uncurst with caution’s fears ;
 That pleasure basking in the blaze,
 Rejoice for endless years.”

I have the honor to be, with the warmest sincerity, dear sir, &c.

R. B.

XII.

TO JAMES JOHNSON.

[James Johnson was an engraver in Edinburgh, and proprietor of the Musical Museum ; a truly national work, for which Burns wrote or amended many songs.]

Lawn-market, Friday noon, 3 May, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you a song never before known, for your

collection; the air by M'Gibbon, but I know not the author of the words, as I got it from Dr. Blacklock.

Farewell, my dear sir! I wished to have seen you, but I have been dreadfully thronged, as I march to-morrow. Had my acquaintance with you been a little older, I would have asked the favor of your correspondence, as I have met with few people whose company and conversation gives me so much pleasure, because I have met with few whose sentiments are so congenial to my own.

When Dunbar and you meet, tell him that I left Edinburgh with the idea of him hanging somewhere about my heart.

Keep the original of the song till we meet again, whenever that may be.

R. B.

XIII.

TO MR. PATISON,

BOOKSELLER, PAISLEY.

[This letter has a business air about it: the name of Patison is nowhere else to be found in the poet's correspondence.]

Berry-well, near Dunse, May 17th, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I AM sorry I was out of Edinburgh, making a slight pilgrimage to the classic scenes of this country, when I was favored with yours of the 11th instant, enclosing an order of the Paisley banking company on the royal bank, for twenty-two pounds seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted, for ninety copies of my book I sent you. According to your motions, I see you

will have left Scotland before this reaches you, otherwise I would send you "Holy Willie" with all my heart. I was so hurried that I absolutely forgot several things I ought to have minded, among the rest, sending books to Mr. Cowan: but any order of yours will be answered at Creech's shop. You will please remember that non-subscribers pay six shillings, this is Creech's profit; but those who have subscribed, though their names have been neglected in the printed list, which is very incorrect, are supplied at subscription price. I was not at Glasgow, nor do I intend for London; and I think Mrs. Fame is very idle to tell so many lies on a poor poet. When you or Mr. Cowan write for copies, if you should want any, direct to Mr. Hill, at Mr. Creech's shop; and I write to Mr. Hill by this post, to answer either of your orders. Hill is Mr. Creech's first clerk, and Creech himself is presently in London. I suppose I shall have the pleasure, against your return to Paisley, of assuring you how much I am, dear sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

XIV.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

AT MILLER AND SMITH'S OFFICE, LINLITHGOW.

[Burns, it seems by this letter, had still a belief that he would be obliged to try his fortune in the West Indies: he soon saw how hollow all the hopes were, which had been formed by his friends of "pension, post or place," in his native land.]

Mauchline, 11th June, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR SIR,

I DATE this from Mauchline, where I arrived on Friday

even last. I slept at John Dow's, and called for my daughter. Mr. Hamilton and family; your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza, &c., all well. If any thing had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean, servile compliance would have done it.

Give me a spirit like my favorite hero, Milton's Satan :

Hail, horrors ! hail,
Infernal world ! and thou profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor ! he who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by *place or time* !

I cannot settle to my mind.—Farming, the only thing of which I know any thing, and heaven above knows, but little do I understand of that, I cannot, dare not risk on farms as they are. If I do not fix, I will go for Jamaica. Should I stay in an unsettled state at home, I would only dissipate my little fortune, and ruin what I intend shall compensate my little ones for the stigma I have brought on their names.

I shall write you more at large soon ; as this letter costs you no postage, if it be worth reading you cannot complain of your penny-worth.

I am ever, my dear Sir,

Yours,

R. B.

P. S. The clout has unfortunately broke, but I have provided a fine buffalo-horn, on which I am going to affix the same cypher which you will remember was on the lid of the clout.

XV.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

[This letter, were proof wanting, shows the friendly and familiar footing on which Burns stood with the Ainslies, and more particularly with the author of that popular work, the "Reasons for the Hope that is in us."]

Mauchline, 23rd July, 1787.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

THERE is one thing for which I set great store by you as a friend, and it is this, that I have not a friend upon earth, besides yourself, to whom I can talk nonsense without forfeiting some degree of his esteem. Now, to one like me, who never cares for speaking any thing else but nonsense, such a friend as you is an unvaluable treasure. I was never a rogue, but have been a fool all my life; and, in spite of all my endeavors, I see now plainly that I shall never be wise. Now it rejoices my heart to have met with such a fellow as you, who, though you are not just such a hopeless fool as I, yet I trust you will never listen so much to the temptations of the devil as to grow so very wise that you will in the least disrespect an honest fellow because he is a fool. In short, I have set you down as the staff of my old age, when the whole list of my friends will, after a decent share of pity, have forgot me.

Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,
Yet joy may come at noon;
And I hope to live a merry, merry life
When a' thir days are done.

Write me soon, were it but a few lines just to tell me how that good sagacious man your father is—that kind dainty body your mother—that strapping chiel your brother Douglas—and my friend Rachel, who is as far before Rachel of old, as she was before her blear-eyed sister Leah.

R. B.

XVI.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

BERRYWELL DUNSE.

[This characteristic letter was first published by Sir Harris Nicolas; others, still more characteristic, addressed to the same gentleman, are abroad; how they escaped from private keeping is a sort of riddle.]

Edinburgh, 23rd August, 1787.

“As I gaed up to Dunsie
 T^o warp a pickle yarn,
 Robin, silly body,
 He gat me wi’ bairn.”

From henceforth, my dear sir, I am determined to set off with my letters like the periodical writers, viz., prefix a kind of text, quoted from some classic of undoubted authority, such as the author of the immortal piece, of which my text is a part. What I have to say on my text is exhausted in a letter which I wrote to you the other day, before I had the pleasure of receiving yours from Inverkeithing; and sure never was any thing more lucky, as I have but the time to write this, that Mr. Nicol, on the opposite side of the table, takes to correct a proof-

sheet of a thesis. They are gabbling Latin so loud that I cannot hear what my own soul is saying in my own skull, so I must just give you a matter-of-fact sentence or two, and end, if time permit, with a verse de rei generatione. To-morrow I leave Edinburgh in a chaise; Nicol thinks it more comfortable than horse-back, to which I say, Amen; so Jenny Geddes goes home to Ayrshire, to use a phrase of my mother's, wi' her finger in her mouth.

Now for a modest verse of classical authority :

The cats like kitchen ;
 The dogs like broo ;
 The lasses like the lads weel,
 And th' auld wives too.

CHORUS.

And we're a' noddin,
 Nid, nid, noddin,
 We're a' noddin fou at e'en.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you ; if you write any time before the 1st of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the post-office till called for ; the next week at Aberdeen, the next at Edinburgh.

The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that

I ever am, and with pride shall be,
 My dear sir, &c.

R. B.

Call the boy what you think proper, only interject Burns. What do you say to a Scripture name ? Zimri Burns Ainslie, or Architophel, &c. look your Bible for these two heroes, if you do this, I will repay the compliment.

XVII.

TO CHARLES HAY, Esq.

ADVOCATE.

[The verses enclosed were written on the death of the Lord President Dundas, at the suggestion of Charles Hay, Esq. advocate, afterwards a judge, under the title of Lord Newton.]

SIR,

THE enclosed poem was written in consequence of your suggestion last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two of next morning's sleep, but did not please me ; so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed ; and, besides the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These ideas damped my muse's fire ; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honor to be, sir, your obliged humble servant.

R. B.

XVIII.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR.

EDINBURGH.

[This letter was printed for the first time by Robert Chambers, in his " People's Edition " of Burns.]

Mauchline, 7th April, 1788.

I HAVE not delayed so long to write to you, my

much respected friend, because I thought no farther of my promise. I have long since given up that kind of formal correspondence, where one sits down irksomely to write a letter, because we think we are in duty bound so to do.

I have been roving over the country, as the farm I have taken is forty miles from this place, hiring servants and preparing matters; but most of all, I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind. As, till within these eighteen months, I never was the wealthy master of ten guineas, my knowledge of business is to learn; add to this, my late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree. Skill in the sober science of life is my most serious and hourly study. I have dropt all conversation and all reading (prose reading) but what tends in some way or other to my serious aim. Except one worthy young fellow, I have not one single correspondent in Edinburgh. You have indeed kindly made me an offer of that kind. The world of wits, and *gens comme il faut* which I lately left, and with whom I never again will intimately mix — from that port, sir, I expect your Gazette: what *les beaux esprits* are saying, what they are doing, and what they are singing. Any sober intelligence from my sequestered walks of life; any droll original; any passing remark, important forsooth, because it is mine; any little poetic effort, however embryoth; these, my dear sir, are all you have to expect from me.* When I talk of poetic efforts, I must have it always understood, that I appeal from your wit and taste to your friendship and good nature. The first would be my favorite tribunal, where I defied censure; but the last, where I declined justice.

I have scarcely made a single distich since I saw you.

When I meet with an old Scots air that has any facetious idea in its name, I have a peculiar pleasure in following out that idea for a verse or two.

I trust that this will find you in better health than I did last time I called for you. A few lines from you, directed to me at Mauchline, were it but to let me know how you are, will set my mind a good deal [at rest.] Now, never shun the idea of writing me because perhaps you may be out of humor or spirits. I could give you a hundred good consequences attending a dull letter; one, for example, and the remaining ninety-nine some other time—it will always serve to keep in countenance, my much respected sir, your obliged friend and humble servant,

R. B.

XIX.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS.

[William Burns was the youngest brother of the poet. He was bred a sadler: went to Longtown, and finally to London, where he died early.]

Isle, March 25, 1789.

I HAVE stolen from my corn-sowing this minute to write a line to accompany your shirt and hat, for I can no more. Your sister Maria arrived yesternight, and begs to be remembered to you. Write me every opportunity, never mind postage. My head, too, is as addle as an egg, this morning, with dining abroad yesterday. I received

yours by the mason. Forgive me this foolish-looking scrawl of an epistle.

I am ever,

My dear William,

Yours,

R. B.

P.S. If you are not then gone from Longtown, I'll write you a long letter, by this day se'en-night. If you should not succeed in your tramps, don't be dejected, or take any rash step — return to us in that case, and we will court fortune's better humor. Remember this, I charge you.

R. B.

XX.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS,

SADDLER,

CARE OF MR. WRIGHT, CARRIER, LONGTOWN.

["Never to despair" was a favorite saying with Burns: "firm resolve," he held, with Young, to be "the column of true majesty in man."]

Isle, 15th April, 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I AM extremely sorry at the misfortune of your legs; I beg you will never let any worldly concern interfere with the more serious matter, the safety of your life and limbs. I have not time in these hurried days to write you any thing other than a mere how d'ye letter. I will only repeat my favorite quotation: —

“What proves the hero truly great
Is never, never to despair.”

My house shall be your welcome home ; and as I know your prudence (would to God you had *resolution* equal to your *prudence* !) if anywhere at a distance from your friends, you should need money, you know my direction by post.

The enclosed is from Gilbert, brought by your sister Nanny. It was unluckily forgot. Yours to Gilbert goes by post. — I heard from them yesterday, they are all well.

Adieu,

R. B.

XXI.

TO LADY W[INIFRED] M[AXWELL]
CONSTABLE.

[The Lady Winifred Maxwell, the last of the old line of Nithsdale, was grand-daughter of that Earl who, in 1715, made an almost miraculous escape from death, through the spirit and fortitude of his countess, a lady of the noble family of Powis.]

Ellisland, 16th December, 1789.

MY LADY,

IN vain have I from day to day expected to hear from Mrs. Young, as she promised me at Dalswinton that she would do me the honor to introduce me at Tinwald ; and it was impossible, not from your ladyship's accessibility, but from my own feelings, that I could go alone. Lately, indeed, Mr. Maxwell of Carruchen, in his usual goodness, offered to accompany me, when an unlucky indisposition on my part hindered my embracing the opportunity. To

court the notice or the tables of the great, except where I have sometimes had a little matter to ask of them, or more often the pleasanter task of witnessing my gratitude to them, is what I never have done, and I trust never shall do, But with your ladyship I have the honor to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole mortal world. Common sufferers, in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious, the cause of heroic loyalty ! Though my fathers had not illustrious honors and vast properties to hazard in the contest, though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost ; with unshaken firmness and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country. The language and the enclosed verses are for your ladyship's eye alone. Poets are not very famous for their prudence ; but as I can do nothing for a cause which is now nearly no more, I do not wish to hurt myself.

I have the honor to be,
My lady,
Your ladyship's obliged and obedient
Humble servant,
R. B.

XXII.
TO PROVOST MAXWELL,
OF LOCHMABEN.

[Of Lochmaben, the "Marjory of the many Lochs" of the election ballads, Maxwell was at this time provost, a post more of honor than of labor.]

Ellisland, 20th December, 1787.

DEAR PROVOST,

As my friend Mr. Graham goes for your good town to-morrow, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, and as I have nothing to say, I have chosen this sheet of foolscap, and begun as you see at the top of the first page, because I have ever observed, that when once people have fairly set out they know not where to stop. Now that my first sentence is concluded, I have nothing to do but to pray Heaven to help me on to another. Shall I write you on Politics or Religion, two master subjects for your sayers of nothing. Of the first I dare say by this time you are nearly surfeited : and for the last, whatever they may talk of it, who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy. I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing, but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bediveled with the task of the superlative damned to make one guinea do the business of three, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business, though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it.

Well, to make the matter short, I shall betake myself to a subject ever fruitful of themes ; a subject the turtle-feast of the sons of Satan, and the delicious secret sugar-plum of the babes of grace—a subject sparkling with all the jewels that wit can find in the mines of genius : and pregnant with all the stores of learning from Moses and Confucius to Franklin and Priestley—in short may it please your Lordship, I intend to write * * *.

[Here the Poet inserted a song which can only be sung at times when the punch-bowl has done its duty and wild wit is set free.]

If at any time you expect a field-day in your town, a day when Dukes, Earls, and Knights pay their court to

weavers, tailors and cobblers, I should like to know of it two or three days beforehand. It is not that I care three skips of a cur dog for the politics, but I should like to see such an exhibition of human nature. If you meet with that worthy old veteran in religion and good-fellowship, Mr. Jeffrey, or any of his amiable family, I beg you will give them my best compliments.

R. B.

XXIII.

TO MR. SUTHERLAND,

PLAYER,

ENCLOSING A PROLOGUE.

[When the farm failed, the poet sought pleasure in the play-house : he tried to retire from his own harassing reflections, into a world created by other minds.]

Monday Morning.

I WAS much disappointed, my dear sir, in wanting your most agreeable company yesterday. However, I heartily pray for good weather next Sunday ; and whatever aerial Being has the guidance of the elements, may take any other half-dozen of Sundays he pleases, and clothe them with

“ Vapors, and clouds, and storms,
Until he terrify himself
At combustion of his own raising.”

I shall see you on Wednesday forenoon. In the greatest hurry,

R. B.

XXIV.

TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, W. S.

[This letter was first published by the Ettrick Shepherd, in his edition of Burns : it is remarkable for this sentence, "I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions : I know the value of independence, and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life." We may look round us and inquire which line of life the poet could possibly mean.]

Ellisland, 14th January, 1790.

SINCE we are here creatures of a day, since "a few summer days and a few winter nights, and the life of man is at an end," why, my dear much-esteemed sir, should you and I let negligent indolence, for I know it is nothing worse, step in between us and bar the enjoyment of a mutual correspondence ? We are not shapen out of the common, heavy, methodical clod, the elemental stuff of the plodding selfish race, the sons of Arithmetic and Prudence : our feelings and hearts are not benumbed and poisoned by the cursed influence of riches, which, whatever blessing they may be in other respects, are no friends to the nobler qualities of the heart : in the name of random sensibility, then, let never the moon change on our silence any more. I have had a tract of bad health most part of this winter, else you had heard from me long ere now. Thank Heaven, I am now got so much better as to be able to partake a little in the enjoyments of life.

Our friend Cunningham will, perhaps, have told you of my going into the Excise. The truth is, I found it a very

convenient business to have £50 per annum, nor have I yet felt any of those mortifying circumstances in it that I was led to fear.

Feb. 2.

I have not, for sheer hurry of business, been able to spare five minutes to finish my letter. Besides my farm business, I ride on my Excise matters at least two hundred miles every week. I have not by any means given up the muses. You will see in the 3d vol. of Johnson's Scots songs that I have contributed my mite there.

But, my dear sir, little ones that look up to you for paternal protection are an important charge. I have already two fine, healthy, stout little fellows, and I wish to throw some light upon them. I have a thousand reveries and schemes about them, and their future destiny. Not that I am a Utopian projector in these things. I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions. I know the value of independence; and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life. What a chaos of hurry, chance, and changes, is this world, when one sits soberly down to reflect on it! To a father, who himself knows the world, the thought that he shall have sons to usher into it must fill him with dread; but if he have daughters, the prospect in a thoughtful moment is apt to shock him.

I hope Mrs. Fordyce and the two young ladies are well. Do let me forget that they are nieces of yours, and let me say that I never saw a more interesting, sweeter pair of sisters in my life. I am the fool of my feelings and attachments. I often take up a volume of my Spenser to realize you to my imagination, and think over the social scenes we have had together. God grant that there may be

another world more congenial to honest fellows beyond this. A world where these rubs and plagues of absence, distance, misfortunes, ill-health, &c., shall no more damp hilarity and divide friendship. This I know is your throng season, but half a page will much oblige,

My dear sir,

Yours sincerely.

R. B.

XXV.

TO DR. ANDERSON.

[The gentleman to whom this imperfect note is addressed was Dr. James Anderson, a well-known agricultural and miscellaneous writer, and the editor of a weekly miscellany called the Bee.]

SIR,

I AM much indebted to my worthy friend, Dr. Blacklock, for introducing me to a gentleman of Dr. Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honor to ask my assistance in your proposed publication, alas, sir! you might as well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an advocate's wig, or humility under the Geneva band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the poor publicans to the grindstone of the excise! and, like Milton's Satan, for private reasons, am forced

"To do what yet though damn'd I would abhor."

— and, except a couplet or two of honest execration

* * * * *

R. B.

XXVI.
TO WILLIAM TYTLER, ESQ.,
OF WOODHOUSELEE.

[William Tytler was the "revered defender of the beauteous Stuart"—a man of genius and a gentleman.]

Lawn Market, August, 1790.

SIR,

ENCLOSED I have sent you a sample of the old pieces that are still to be found among our peasantry in the west. I had once a great many of these fragments, and some of these here entire; but as I had no idea then that any body cared for them, I have forgotten them. I invariably hold it sacrilege to add anything of my own to help out with the shattered wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many, various readings. If you have not seen these before, I know they will flatter your true old-style Caledonian feelings; at any rate I am truly happy to have an opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I am, revered sir,

Your gratefully indebted humble servant,

R. B.

XXVII.
TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, W. S.

[This letter was in answer to one from Dunbar, in which the witty colonel of the Crochallan Fencibles supposed the poet had been translated to Elysium to sing to the immortals, as his voice had not been heard of late on earth.]

Ellisland, 17th January, 1791.

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble colonel, but am

still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image, and honoring my king by begetting him loyal subjects.

Many happy returns of the season await my friend. May the thorns of care never beset his path! May peace be an inmate of his bosom, and rapture a frequent visiter of his soul! May the blood-hounds of misfortune never track his steps, nor the screech-owl of sorrow alarm his dwelling! May enjoyment tell thy hours, and pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard! "Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!!!"

As a farther proof that I am still in the land of existence, I send you a poem, the latest I have composed. I have a particular reason for wishing you only to show it to select friends, should you think it worthy a friend's perusal; but if, at your first leisure hour, you will favor me with your opinion of, and strictures on the performance, it will be an additional obligation on, dear sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

XXVIII.

TO MRS. GRAHAM,

OF FINTRY.

[The following letter was written on the blank leaf of a new edition of his poems, presented by the poet to one whom he regarded, and justly, as a patroness.]

It is probable, madam, that this page may be read, when the hand that now writes it shall be mouldering in

the dust; may it then bear witness, that I present you these volumes as a tribute of gratitude, on my part ardent and sincere, as your and Mr. Graham's goodness to me has been generous and noble! May every child of yours, in the hour of need, find such a friend as I shall teach every child of mine, that their father found in you.

R. B.

XXIX.

TO COLONEL FULLARTON,

OF FULLARTON.

[This letter was first published in the *Edinburgh Chronicle*.]

Ellisland, 1791.

SIR,

I HAVE just this minute got the frank, and next minute must send it to post, else I purposed to have sent you two or three other bagatelles, that might have amused a vacant hour about as well as "Six excellent new songs," or, the Aberdeen "Prognostication for the year to come." I shall probably trouble you soon with another packet. About the gloomy month of November, when "the people of England hang and drown themselves," any thing generally is better than one's own thought.

Fond as I may be of my own productions, it is not for their sake that I am so anxious to send you them. I am ambitious, covetously ambitious of being known to a gentleman whom I am proud to call my countryman: a gentleman who was a foreign ambassador as soon as he was a man, and a leader of armies as soon as he was a soldier; and that with an *éclat* unknown to the usual minions of a

court, men who, with all the adventitious advantages of princely connexions and princely fortune, must yet, like the caterpillar, labor a whole lifetime before they reach the wished height, there to roost a stupid chrysalis, and doze out the remaining glimmering existence of old age.

If the gentleman who accompanied you when you did me the honor of calling on me, is with you, I beg to be respectfully remembered to him.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your highly obliged, and most devoted

Humble servant,

R. B.

XXX.

TO MR. THOMSON.

[Cromek informed me, on the authority of Mrs. Burns, that the "handsome, elegant present" mentioned in this letter, was a common worsted shawl.

February, 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs. Burns, and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar. Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favorite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo, with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words,

and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

Awa' wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs I dislike one thing, the name Chloris — I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady ; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this, and some things else, in my next : I have more amendments to propose. What you once mentioned of “flaxen locks” is just : they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty. Of this also again — God bless you !*

R. B.

XXXI.

TO MR. CLARKE,

SCHOOLMASTER, FORFAR.

[Who will say, after reading the following distressing letter, lately come to light, that Burns did not die in great poverty.]

Dumfries, 25th June, 1796.

MY DEAR CLARKE.

STILL, still the victim of affliction ! Were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend. Whether I shall ever

* Our poet never explained what name he would have substituted for Chloris. — MR. THOMSON.

get about again, is only known to Him, the Great Unknown, whose creature I am. Alas, Clarke! I begin to fear the worst.

As to my individual self, I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not; but Burns's poor widow, and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones — helpless orphans! — *there* I am weak as a woman's tear. Enough of this! 'Tis half of my disease.

I duly received your last, enclosing the note. It came extremely in time, and I am much obliged by your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as, by return of post, to enclose me *another* note. I trust you can do it without inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me. If I must go, I shall leave a few friends behind me, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance. Adieu, dear Clarke, that I shall ever see you again is, I am afraid, highly improbable.

R. B.

XXXII.

TO MR. JAMES ARMOUR,

MASON, MAÜCHLINE.

[The original letter is now in a safe sanctuary, the hands of the poet's son, Major James Glencairn Burns.]

July, 10th [1796.]

FOR Heaven's sake and as you value the we[l] fare of your daughter and my wife, do, my dearest sir, write to Fife, to Mrs. Armour to come if possible. My wife

thinks she can yet reckon upon a fortnight. The medical people order me, *as I value my existence*, to fly to sea-bathing and country-quarters, so it is ten thousand chances to one that I shall not be within a dozen miles of her when her hour comes. What a situation for her, poor girl, without a single friend by her on such a serious moment.

I have now been a week at salt-water, and though I think I have got some good by it, yet I have some secret fears that this business will be dangerous, if not fatal.

Your most affectionate son,

R. B.

FINIS.

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